


*The*  
REAL MOTIVE



DOROTHY CANFIELD



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## THE REAL MOTIVE

*BY THE SAME AUTHOR*

*FICTION*

THE BENT TWIG  
HILLSBORO PEOPLE  
THE SQUIRREL-CAGE  
GUNHILD

*NON-FICTION*

A MONTESSORI MOTHER  
MOTHERS AND CHILDREN

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HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY  
PUBLISHERS . . . NEW YORK

# THE REAL MOTIVE

By

DOROTHY CANFIELD



NEW YORK  
HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY  
1916

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*Published May, 1916*

THE QUINN & BODEN CO. PRESS  
RAHWAY, N. J.

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## THE REAL MOTIVE

## BUT THIS IS ALSO EVERLASTING LIFE

We call this Time and gauge it by the clock,  
Deep in such insect cares as suit that view,  
As whether dresses fit, what modes are new,  
And where to buy, and when to barter, stock.  
We think we hold, based on some Scripture rock,  
Claims on immortal life, to press when due ;  
Imagining some door between the two,  
Our deaths shall each, with presto change, unlock.

But this is also Everlasting Life :  
On Monday in the kitchen, street or store,  
We are immortal, we, the man and wife ;  
Immortal now, or shall be nevermore.  
Immortals in immortal values spend  
Those lives that shall no more begin than end.

## THE PRAGMATIST

*"Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?*

*"He that . . . speaketh the truth in his heart."*

*As he lay dying, he shuddered at the thought of his lifelong duplicity. He had always worn a mask; he had never been his true self. In the isolation of the sick-room he faced the facts with horror. He had been a hypocrite since the beginning of his conscious life.*

*And yet, as he went wearily over the years behind him, it seemed that as each day had come upon him, the long fraud had been necessary. The time had never come when he dared lay it aside and be himself. Thrown constantly with weak and wavering souls, it had seemed impossible not to pretend to a courage and certainty he could not feel. Passing his life among fretful complaints, he had felt so keenly the need of serenity and faith that he had counterfeited them, ransoming from doubt those he loved, with false moneys of a calm he himself dared not trust.*

*Driven to bay by his realization of the futility of resistance to the powers of evil, he had fought desperately and hopelessly with a sword of integrity in whose temper he had no confidence, making a show of battle which he knew could mean only defeat. Knowing the enemy to be irresistible, he had encouraged others by heartening cries to follow him upon a quest at once aimless and futile.*

*All in him was a sham; he had never spoken a consciously true word. Upon the wretched world about him he had showered a flood of reassuring thoughts, of inspiriting phrases, of resolute aspirations . . . and all with the sinking heart of one who speaks of a cheerful to-morrow to a man lying at the point of death.*

*A web of falsehood . . . all his much-praised life.*

*And now he was come to the end of it. He was an imposter, through and through. The very face which lay on the pillow was not his, since it was calm from a long habit of hiding his base and real passions, hardened into a mask of mock courage above his fainting heart and weak, despairing soul.*

*A deathlike chill crept upon him. This was the beginning of dissolution, he thought. Soon the mask would be torn from him, and his true face of agonized doubt disclosed. In the unsparing mirror which death was about to hold before him he would at last see*



*himself as he really was . . . and he trembled in an awful terror*

*. . . yet those who were with him at the last, say that at the end he cried out in a loud voice of exceeding joy.*



## THE CONVICTION OF SIN

"THE trouble with all that kind of talk," remarked Mr. Walker, judicially, as he listened to the reverberations of the revivalist's impassioned periods, "is that it's out of date. That's the way folks used to go on about religion when I was a boy back in West End-bury, but it's as much gone by now as putting bear-grease on your hair." After emitting this dictum, he put his pipe back in his mouth, cocked his feet up on the railing of his porch, and contemplated with great satisfaction the new concrete walk from the street to the house. "Concrete costs like the devil," he admitted to his wife; "but there's some class to it, once you got it."

There was a pause. The sweet, hot June night was vibrant with the stirring of the year's new life, with the whirl of the Walker lawn-sprinkler revolving briskly, with the soft spatter of the water on the grass, and with the bellowings of the revivalist preacher in the little church next door. It was an old joke of Walker's that he and his family never needed to go to church. "All we gotta do any time," he explained, "is to sit on the porch and soak up righteousness without bothering to put on a coat and vest."

As a rule, it was only the hymns and an occasional loud burst of eloquence from the minister which carried over to the Walker's comfortable, vine-covered porch, but for the last week their evenings had been varied by hearing a great deal of preaching. A superannuated open-air revivalist, whose vogue had now passed, so that he was only sought for in unimportant churches, was spending a fortnight in the tidy little city, with the avowed purpose of stirring it from what he called, to the mingled wrath and contemptuous amusement of his invisible listener, "its hellish, smug self-satisfaction." The fiery old man's voice, harsh and broken with years of tent speech-making, rent the air like a brazen trumpet invariably off the key.

"My! Don't he holler!" commented Mrs. Walker, the first night of his ministrations.

The two Walker children, at the highly fastidious ages of seventeen and twenty, found the old preacher "the limit," and regularly, as they went on to say, "took to the woods," as soon as his raucous, denouncing voice began its nightly appeals to its audience to repent and turn from their viciousness. But the father said 'twould take more than hell-fire to keep him off his own porch after a hard day's work at the store.

He had an immense pride and satisfaction in his home, and in everything that belonged to it, from his wife—still comely and very competent—down to the

latest new improvement, whatever that might be. Just now it was the new concrete sidewalk.

He had begun life as an errand-boy in what was now his own big, prosperous grocery-store; and of this success his well-painted, tree-shaded, lawn-surrounded, much piazzaded house was the visible symbol. He was quite conscious of this pleasure in the outward and visible signs of his triumph over the innumerable possibilities of failure, and although he was occasionally tickled by the quaint, old-fashioned grimness of the revivalist's vocabulary, he was more than once nettled and vexed by denunciations which ignored the possibility of such patently justifiable satisfaction as his. When the preacher bawled out a well-worn phrase to the effect that ordinary good works and decent living were as nothing in the judgment of the Almighty, and went on bellowing about the necessity for the deepest conviction of sin before any spiritual life could begin, Mr. Walker in his shirtsleeves took lively exception to this doctrine.

"It makes me tired to hear anybody still getting off that old guff they used to scare the girls with forty years ago! You can't make folks nowadays believe they're miserable worms. Why *shouldn't* a man who's worked hard and kept straight and made a success of life take some satisfaction in it? If he's got good sense, he won't crawl in the mud and say he's a vile sinner. He knows he ain't."



He did not make this declaration in the first person, but the implication was frank. His wife agreed with him, though absently. She was knitting a fancy party-scarf for Susy, and her mind was not on theology. But when the minister in the little church next door, preaching to the meager congregation which came to hear him, screamed out that no man could get any spiritual return for charity or good works until he realized the abominations of his own heart, Mr. Walker nodded his head in ironic agreement, and told his wife:

"There's where he hits the nail on the head, Eliza! It's only the fellows who got some reason to think they're vile worms that gives the half-dollars to the bums."

Like many other successful people, Mr. Walker had a small opinion of what is usually known as charity. "It don't do 'em a bit of good"—he always thus explained his refusal to put his name down on subscription-lists for destitute families. "The same things that sent 'em down and out in the first place will keep 'em down and out till the cows come home. It's like pouring water into a sieve." And if he caught his wife giving food to a tramp, she was always treated to a disquisition on the folly of almsgiving.

Although they had frequent acrimonious disputes, he was very dependent on his wife, and told her every-

thing that was in his mind. She was an integral part of one of his daily pleasures, which was to sit of an evening with the local newspaper, reading aloud to his wife bits which might interest her, and which were not so long as to be tiresome to him. His children, now growing rapidly to the assertive age, were very restive under this second-hand, dribbled acquaintance with the news, but his wife, who knew that the proceeding always put him in a good humor, had a special bit of fancy-work which she kept for the mitigation of that hour.

On the last evening of the old revivalist's sojourn next door, the Walkers sat in their living-room by the lamp. Mrs. Walker was knitting, with a resigned expression, while her husband read aloud from the paper's "patent-insides" some statistics about the number of thousand feet cut every year in the mahogany forests of Brazil. Suddenly he gave an exclamation:

"Gee whiz! . . . Whad d'y' think o' that!" and read aloud: "' News has reached this office that Mr. Marshall Druitt, a New York financier and newspaper owner, is thinking of buying a number of farms out in the Olan River region, north of our city, and consolidating them into a great estate. Although Mr. Druitt is not one of the well-advertised magnates of New York, those who are in a position to know say that he is one of the richest men in this country. His

fondness for country life comes from a boyhood on the soil. Mr. Druitt has risen from being a poor farmer's son to his present financial eminence. The fairer ones among our readers may be interested to know that Mrs. Druitt before her marriage was the great heiress and beauty, Miss Eleanor Van der Bart, the second daughter of Mr. Druitt's business associate, Mr. Nicholas Van der Bart, the well-known capitalist and philanthropist.' ”

Mr. Walker laid down the paper with an air of stupefaction.

“ Well—? ” said his wife, her rising inflection indicating with some impatience that if there was anything interesting in that item of news, her husband would have to expound it for her.

“ Why, that's Marsh Druitt! ” cried Mr. Walker, in a loud voice, staring at his wife as though he expected her to contradict him. “ That's Marsh Druitt, that I was brought up with as a boy, back in West Endbury! ”

His wife admitted by an “ Is that so? ” the concession that this was not an ordinary fact, but continued to count her stitches unperturbed. Her imagination was not the most prominent feature in her intellectual physiognomy.

Her husband went on, rubbing his hand back and forth over the top of his now slightly bald head: “ Well! well! Who'd ha' thought it? Us boys used to

think he was queer. He was crazy about wanting to be a printer, I remember."

"Yes," commented Mrs. Walker, "the paper says he's a newspaper man now."

"So it does!" Mr. Walker returned to the sheet and reread the paragraph slowly to himself. After he finished, he stared a long time at it in silence. Then he shook his head. "Well, if that don't beat *me*! There's no doubt about its being Marsh. First place, there never was but one such queer name. That about his father being a poor farmer, too. Marsh's father had a good-for-nothing farm out in the sand north of West Endbury. Marsh hated farming then, though. He wanted to be a printer. Us boys wanted to make some labels to stick on the teacher's desk—something about a beau she had—and Marsh 'most killed himself trying to print 'em on the town printing-press. He got in at night, and was going to do it, when he heard somebody coming, and jumped out o' the window. Landed on his head. Us boys were 'most scared to death. We none of us ever told how he got hurt. I guess folks don't know about it in West Endbury to this day."

Mrs. Walker preserved the neutral silence in which wives often listen to their husband's reminiscences, and he went on: "Say . . . don't you remember my reading to you a while back about Nicholas Van der Bart's other daughter getting married to an English

duke? Gosh! Think of old Marsh Druitt brother-in-law to a duke!" He picked the paper up again, but in a moment cast it down. Sudden irritability seemed to have descended on him. "It's awful hot and close here," he complained. "Why the dickens don't we go out on the porch?"

As they opened the door, the battered, brassy voice of the old preacher, roaring through the night, burst upon their ears: ". . . the judgment-seat and the awful eye of the Lord. Unless a man knows in his heart what a mean, scabby rat he is, he'll never know what the grace of the Lord can do to save him."

Mr. Walker spoke with the air of a man whose patience is utterly worn out: "Gee! That old donkey does get on my nerves with his everlasting hee-haw!"

The next morning Mr. Walker woke up feeling as though he had not digested his supper.

"What 'd we have to eat last night, anyhow, Eliza?" he asked his wife, accusingly.

"Oh, just the usual things," she answered, with the indifference of a wife of long standing to her husband's moods: "Creamed potatoes and cold salmon and strawberry short-cake."

Finding nothing to complain of in that innocuous menu, Mr. Walker got heavily out of bed and began to dress. He felt as he did when there was a bad



taste in his mouth. But there was no bad taste in his mouth.

Even the first sight of his store, usually an exhilarating moment in his day, did not, on this morning, exorcise the dull, leaden lump which lay disquietingly somewhere within him. He stopped across the street to look at the front, which always gave him so much pride, and found no mental comment to make save that the big plate-glass windows were not as clean as they ought to be, and the great gilt sign, "Fancy Groceries—B. F. Walker," had been shaken by the last wind-storm so that it hung askew.

It was not until late that morning, as he was personally waiting on one of the town's richest women, that he suddenly learned what was the cloud hanging sullenly at the back of his consciousness. His customer—one of his best, whose extravagant insistence on metropolitan luxuries had helped more than anything else to build up the "fine" part of his grocering—chanced to speak casually to a friend with her of the news that the New York Druitts might come to be summer residents of the region. At the name the dull lump of discomfort which had afflicted the grocer all the morning stirred into a momentary acute sickness.

He was astonished to realize that Marshall Druitt's success was what was the matter with him. During the rest of the day—all through the hurry and press of a retail business—his mind returned stealthily to

the thought of Druitt's money, his rank, his social position. He took a morbid pleasure in these painful thoughts.

He had another surprise that afternoon, when, after his return home, his wife remarked that she s'posed he'd go and look up Mr. Druitt when he came to town and remind him they were boys together. He was really as startled as she by the fierce violence of his revulsion from this idea, which had not before occurred to him.

"No, I won't!" he said, in angry haste. "I won't have any man think I'm hanging on to him just because I happened to know him when he was a boy." And while he was still glaring at her and breathing hard, he was wondering why he should feel such a hatred of the idea of seeing his old friend.

"Oh, well, if you want to be so awfully independent!" said his wife, somewhat offended; "only I call it standing up so straight you lean over backward."

The grocer felt grateful to her for thus labeling the unrecognizable seething in his heart. "Oh, any man that's worth his salt likes to feel independent," he said, looking around at his children. "That's the American of it."

For several days he was upheld by this dramatizing of his moral equality with his old associate, but little by little, at a thousand leaks, a still, cold, deadly tide began to seep into the warm complacency of his

ordered and regular life. He could not get the name of Druitt out of his head, a difficulty which was increased by the fact that in the local paper there was now and then an occasional paragraph about the financier. For some reason, which he could not have explained, Mr. Walker read no more of these aloud to his wife, although he pored over them till he could shut his eyes in the night and see the paragraph imprinted on the dark. One of these made the estimate (based, as is usual with such fanciful computations, on the sketchiest knowledge of the facts) that the prospective resident of the county had for weekly income a sum which stuck in the mind of the owner of B. F. Walker's Fine Grocery-Store. It chanced to be almost exactly the gross sum taken in during the year by the store. "*Gross*, . . . not the profits!" he cried aloud to himself as he walked downtown the morning after he had read this; and he looked around hastily to see if any one had heard him.

Another paragraph which he did not read aloud related to the beauty of Mrs. Druitt. It seemed that she was much younger than her husband, who had not married till past his forties; and that she was still considered one of the greatest belles among her sister's English Court circle. Over the top of his newspaper Mr. Walker gave a long, furtive look at his unconscious wife—frankly middle-aged like himself, her hair done in the sleek, plain manner she affected in

hot weather, a blue-and-white checked gingham dress clothing her matronly girth. He had often quarreled with his wife, but never till then had he been disloyal to her. As he looked, his mind was filled with ugly thoughts which had never visited him before—that a man was a fool to marry young, since later on, with an established position, he could pick and choose as a beginner could not; that at forty-five a man is still physically in his prime and a woman is old, and that it is hard on a man still in his prime to be tied to an old woman. After that there was added to his new, silent communings with himself, a fixed resolution that, whatever else happened, Druitt should never see Mrs. Walker. He felt he would be too ashamed of her.

For a new preoccupation had come upon him one day, with a bound, like a wild beast springing from ambush. Even if he didn't go to look up Marshall Druitt, suppose they met by accident! In fact, once the idea entered his head, he did not see how they could avoid meeting by accident, almost as soon as the Druitts established themselves on the new estate. There would be comings and goings to the station from the Druitt place, of course; and there, emblazoned for all to see on the main street of the town, was his huge sign, proclaiming to all the world that B. F. Walker, who had started life on equal terms with the great financier, was now a grocery-man in a

small provincial city. Of course, Marshall would remember the name; the "B. F." had been an old joke between them as boys. The grocer writhed like a beetle on a pin at the thought of their first encounter. Perhaps Marshall would try to be affable and condescending. If he did, he'd see that he couldn't put on any high-falutin' airs with—But suppose the grocer happened to be putting up candy in a bag, or tying up soap? With what face could he put down purse-proud condescension? He imagined the encounter in a thousand different circumstances, each one more humiliating than the others. He was now not only disloyal to his wife; he was ashamed of the business which had been the pride of his life.

And he came to be ashamed of his house—any one of Druitt's gardeners had a better one, he supposed. He was ashamed of his children. Susy wasn't a bit pretty, and hadn't any "way" with her for the boys; and Junior was good for nothing, with his lackadaisical liking for his violin, which he played so badly. The grocer tried to shake off the obsession. He succeeded for whole hours in forgetting it; but suddenly, as he looked at something which had given him pleasure before, he saw it as it would appear to the rich man, and the taste of apples of Sodom was in his mouth.

One night as he lay sleepless, struggling with his demon, a great idea struck him. If he could but elimi-

nate the sign, the great gilt "B. F. Walker," he would be safe. Druitt would never suspect his proximity, would never in the world hear of him; he could live on in unobserved anonymity and breathe freely. The idea seemed to him such a perfect answer to his troubles that it was not until he reached the store that it occurred to him how difficult it would be to think of a pretext for taking down the sign. It needed no repairs, having been freshly gilded not long before, and only the other day he had paid a man to climb up and straighten it when it hung askew. Every one knew his pride in it—he had often told his clerks of the lifting of heart with which he had first seen his own name over the door of the shop where he had begun as a poor errand-boy. The day passed without his being able to think of any excuse for removing it. He slept badly that night.

As he approached the store the next morning, the sun shone on the gilt letters till they sparkled. It seemed to the proprietor that one could see nothing else on the street. He looked up at it and hated it, and resolved that, excuse or no excuse, he would have it down before night. It was his. He could do what he wanted with it. But when the moment came to face the astonished eyes and silent, surprised conjectures of his clerks, he could not do it, and, raging within, put off his enterprise until the next day. The Druitts were not to make their first visit to the new



estate for some weeks. Perhaps something would happen before then. Perhaps a wind would blow the damned sign down.

That evening after the clerks had all gone home, he stood alone in the store, making his usual nightly count of the money in the cash-register. The process had none of its old savor. He looked at the open drawer, full to the brim with bills and coins, and reflected bitterly that it would look like chicken-feed to the man whose weekly income was more than his store took in during the year. But when a man's figure stepped across the threshold, his lifelong habit of care for the money in the store sent him quickly and a little belligerently to meet the new-comer. Then, seeing that the man was very shabby, and walked feebly, he called out to him, peremptorily, "Too late! Business is over."

"I don't want to buy anything," said the man in a toneless voice. He continued to shamle forward, in spite of the other's repellent attitude, and finally the grocer stepped toward him to put him out by force.

"Don't you know me, Benjy?" said the man, halting. The light fell on a thin face, covered with a short stubble of gray beard. In spite of the wavering, disheartened eyes, the lines of premature age, and the stooped shoulders, he was so unmistakably the same person whom Walker had last seen as a

visionary lad of seventeen that before he knew it the familiar name was on his lips. For an instant the envenomed last weeks did not exist, nor even the long lapse of years since they were both boys.

"Why, Marsh Druitt! What you doing here?" cried the grocer. Then it all came back. "No," he corrected himself. "Of course that's wrong, but—you looked so like an old schoolmate of mine—"

"Oh, I'm Marsh Druitt all right," said the other, with an uneasy, propitiating smile. He took off his shabby derby-hat and touched his fingers to a long scar running back from his forehead into his thin, uncombed gray hair. "There's the place where I hit when I fell out of the window that time when we tried to print those labels. You boys thought I was dead." He added, with no change of tone in the same slightly acrid voice, "and a good job for me if I had been."

"But you *can't* be Marshall Druitt!" cried the other. "There's—why he's the one who owns the newspapers, and—"

"Oh yes—him," said the other, unsurprised. "That ain't his real name. He's a Polish Jew. They all take on American names as soon as they get to this country. I wondered once how he got mine, and I wrote him about it. He'd happened to see it in a list of folks hurt in a railway accident. He said he liked the sound of it. His real name is Solomon Blumensky."



The grocer was for a moment almost unmanned by the extremity of his reaction. He was penetrated by the same aching relief which comes after the lancet has discharged the hot, poisonous matter from a throbbing ulcer. He leaned against the counter and swallowed.

The other man dismissed the matter and went on with a tremulous boldness: "Say—Benjy—I wonder if you'd do something for an old friend. I'm—I'm—I just *got* to have some money. My wife's sick, and my boy's got into trouble, and I lost my job, and I ain't got a soul to help me out, I ain't very well, either. The doctors say I'm a 'T. B.'"

He stopped, his thin, dirty fingers clutching hard at the broken rim of his hat, and looked abjectly, with a shameful timidity, at the well-fed prosperous man before him.

"But how'd you know where I—how'd you happen to— Why, *I* didn't know you lived here!" The grocer was lost in stupefied conjecture.

"I didn't want you should," returned the other, with the acrid bitterness which constantly tinged his weak voice. "I was ashamed for you to. We started together, and you won out and I'm a failure. I been here for three years now. We live over beyond the railroad tracks where the Ginnies are. I been setting type on their Ginny newspaper. I'd be ashamed for you to see the two rooms we live in. My wife ain't

had her health for years, and she can't keep things up. I lost my job three weeks ago. They give it to a cousin of the man that runs the paper—and I was the one that learned him to set type, too! I was behind with my bills then. My wife's been sick a lot—and my boy gambles a good deal, and he had bad luck. I been tryin' ever since to get up my nerve to ask you for some money. It's begging. 'Twon't be a loan. I won't live to pay it back. I've walked up and down in front of your house more'n a hundred times—but I couldn't go in—everything looked so nice—”

His voice broke. He turned away and stood with his back to the owner of the store, his head hanging.

The mind of the other man was working with involuntary quickness and vividness. The reaction from the feverish tension of the last weeks was like a fever itself. His imagination, usually rather sluggish, now bounded forward, carrying him away like a runaway horse. He saw the whole situation with a completeness and a rapidity which was not his usual mental habit. It was as though a cog had slipped, so furious was the haste of the ideas thronging into his head. Yes, he saw it all—the lean, hungry failure, slinking before the well-kept house, and wincing at every evidence of another's success. Mr. Walker drew a long breath—it seemed the first really long breath he had taken for some time. Yes, it must have looked pretty

good to him—the man who lived in two rooms, over in Ginny-town across the tracks.

Maybe Eliza was out tending to the flower-beds—Eliza with one of her nice, fresh gingham dresses and her hair fixed nice. Rather different, that, from a sickly slattern who couldn't keep two rooms in order. And perhaps Junior had come down the new concrete walk in his well-pressed ready-mades, his violin in his hand, on his way to a lesson. Not much knowledge of gambling-hells about that boy! Yes, it was easy for Mr. B. F. Walker to imagine the effect of that picture on the spectator in broken shoes and shabby clothes, hiding under the shadow of the trees across the street. A little warm feeling began to glow in Mr. Walker's heart.

And then the store—the store must have looked pretty good to him, too, with the new plate-glass showcase, and the fountain in the middle, playing on the expensive salad-stuffs, and the well-dressed customers coming and going. The proprietor looked about him with alert eyes. Yes, indeed, old Marsh must have been taken aback the first time he looked at the store and read the big gilt sign above it and knew it was his old schoolmate who—

At the thought of the sign, recollection of the last weeks came back to him like a blow. He stiffened as though a knife had been run through him. It felt exactly like a knife—a sudden, fierce, violent stab. He

did not know that he had given a low cry of dismay nor that the other man had turned, startled. He was staring at the blank wall, an expression of acute nausea on his face, the corners of his mouth drawn down, his lower lip dropped. He did not see the wall. He saw a vision of what manner of soul his was, and a great regenerating moral sickness shook him from head to foot. It was like fire in his vitals, searing out of him his lifelong opinion of himself. He felt that for the rest of his life he would be ashamed to meet his wife's eyes or look up at the guilt sign.

The loss of his self-respect was like a momentary death to him, and he struck out convulsively to retain it, with as irrepressible an instinct to live as that of a suffocating man who fights for air.

He rushed at the other man, and, clutching his ragged coat-sleeve, dragged him back to the cash-register. The drawer still stood open, with its cunningly hollowed holes and pockets full to the brim with coins and bills. He pushed the other man toward it. "Here—take what you want!" he cried, roughly. "Just put both hands in and take out what you want!"

As the other drew back, frightened by his wild, pale face, "Take it! *Take it!*" shouted the grocer, the sweat running down his face.

## AN APRIL MASQUE

### I

It was spring in Versailles, one of those golden April days when the last of the violets are still in bloom and the first lilacs are opening, when the old pleasure-ground of the Bourbons is the loveliest spot in all the lovely world. There, in that corner of the park which is still called "The Garden of the King," sat Jules Dorival, his spirit thrilling with ecstasy. Because he was a painter, not a historian, he thought not at all of the political upheavals that had thrown open to the poorest citizens of the republic the favorite promenade of Louis the Magnificent; but because he was a painter the beauty of the visible world filled him with a joy so piercing that it was almost unbearable. He closed his eyes, and being of Latin blood, wept for joy at the revelation of the soul of the lovely old garden, shown to him in a shimmering vision of colors, harmonies, lines, such as, he thought passionately, only angels—nay, archangels!—deserved to see.

He opened his eyes again, and noticed that he was no longer alone. Some one had come up and now sat on the other end of his stone bench. It was neither

an angel nor an archangel, but a small old man, dressed poorly in black, very forlorn, very drooping, a doleful little blot on the splendor of the day. He cast a deprecating glance at the superb young swell from Paris, and edged around shyly to conceal the poverty-stricken noon-day meal which he took out of a paper bag. Jules Dorival, the success of that year's Salon, with the ample proceeds of a prosperous sale still in his pocket, had just lunched on squab smothered in mushrooms, asparagus, and hot-house grapes, all washed down with sparkling Saumur. He looked with a pity that was almost horror at the lump of bread on which the old man was now munching, and felt instinctively for his purse.

Even as his fingers touched it, something about the fineness of the other's thin old profile moved him to caution before he offered alms. He moved along the bench and began a casually conversational investigation. "A fine day, Monsieur."

The old man admitted the truth of this statement in a small, sad voice.

"And a heavenly spot," Jules went on.

The other nodded, and after he had swallowed with difficulty a large mouthful of dry bread, ventured the observation that it grew finer every year.

"You speak as though you had known it long," angled Jules.

"For nearly forty years, my young friend."

"Oh, most fortunate of mortals!"

The old man looked up quickly as if in fear of a pleasantry, and said nothing.

Jules explained himself. "My profession is such that I am, perhaps, more moved than another might be by the great beauty of the park at this season."

"Your profession is—?" asked the old man in black.

"I am an artist." The young man might have been announcing that he was a reigning sovereign.

His statement had a singular effect on the cheerless little figure at the other end of the bench. The old man sat up straight, brushed the crumbs from his tie, pulled down his threadbare waistcoat, and offered his hand with a grand gesture. "Sir, we are comrades-at-arms. I, too, am an artist."

## II

It was three o'clock before they rose from the bench. "I have not had in years so long a break in a working-day," averred the old gentleman, "nor so agreeable a one as our talk together has made."

Jules did not answer, but allowed the other to take his arm and lead him along to the Grand Canal, and then up the stone steps toward the château.

"It is indeed a rare privilege to introduce such a painting to such an artist," the old man went on, "and



you must not reproach yourself that you have overlooked it heretofore in your inspection of the grand art treasures of Versailles. It is but a small canvas. Its greatness lies in its subject; a greatness I have not begun to exhaust, after my lifetime of study of it."

Jules nodded. He was trying to conceal the fact that he had never in his life been inside the château, regarding it, with all of his sophisticated and knowing generation, as a chamber of horror of bad paintings, bought and preserved by political demagogues because of the cheap patriotism of their subjects. Not only was he a painter of the last hue of modernity, but he was a Socialist of the latest hue of Internationalism; and he found immensely diverting the fate which thus dragged him forward to admire all that was anathema to him.

"Pardon me," said his old companion. "I—I—" he hesitated, looking down at his feet. Long before this Jules had been shocked to notice that they were encased in heavy wooden shoes, such as the poorest workmen wear. "I—to a fellow-artist, M. Dorival, there can be no shame in admitting the shifts to which devotion to our common profession has brought me. Wooden shoes are not allowed in the gallery—the fine floors you know—and I have no others. The list slippers to which I change are kept for me by an obliging custodian, but as he is not yet returned, I



shall be forced to wait a few moments." He was in a fidget of impatience at the delay to the other's pleasure. "Pray do not wait for me. It is the third small room after the long gallery. My easel with a half-finished copy stands before it, and as I am, alas! the only copyist here—"

Jules went forward alone, cheering himself with the reflection that after all the pictures could not be as bad as—his mouth fell open at his first glimpse of the long gallery. He traversed it in an absolute silence, looking faithfully at each of the huge canvases. He went into the first of the small rooms. He went into the second. He went into the third, and passing rapidly to the window leaned his forehead against the pane. "If I had not seen the first small room, I would have upheld against any man, with the weapons of his choice, that nothing could be more dreadful than the long gallery. And if I had not seen the second small room, I would have sworn that the first was—and oh! Apollos and the Muses! here is the third!"

He faced about and resolutely took in the picture-covered walls. His eye fell on the canvas, its face turned to the easel. He went bravely across the room and stared at the painting before which it stood. Then, raising his right hand above his head, "The worst painting in the world," he said solemnly, "I have seen it!" He turned, knocking with his elbow

the canvas from the easel. He picked it up, held it at arm's length, and leaned against the wall for support as he palely gazed at it.

A quick, shuffling step came down the long gallery and through the two small rooms. "You are looking at my work, I see," said the old copyist, with a shy haste to know the other's opinion. "Dare I ask you how it seems to you?"

Jules looked at the old man, his emaciated little person at once shrinking and eager, his lips dropped apart like a wistful child's. He took his hand and pressed it hard. "I think it," he said with generous emphasis, "I think it the very most faithful copy I ever saw in my life."

### III

Seated around a table at Laveille's, blowing the foam from their bocks, rolling their cigarettes, abusing the pictures in that year's Salon, and light-heartedly delivering themselves of the last cry in incendiary socialism, eight of "The Immortal Nine," as they called themselves with an artless candor, welcomed the returning Jules with shouts of affectionate derision.

"He would play the poet and see spring in the country, would he?"

"No more tawdry boulevard trees for HIM!"

“The only man in Paris sane enough to leave it!”

Jules dropped into a chair and took off his hat. At the sight of his face they were silent. He began to speak. They listened. Their cigarettes went out. After a time they drew their chairs closer to where he sat. At this sign that his listeners were with him, his voice warmed.

“This day, while I idled, full-fed, in the sun, this day he ate his bread seasoned with despair—with an old man’s hopeless despair. I asked him, ‘Can it be you do not know of the Lavignac Home for Old Artists? Surely there would be a retreat for you there.’ At that it all came out with a rush. Yes, he knew the Home—knew much more about it than I. For many years he had planned to spend his days there, in the pleasant and honorable company of others who had devoted their lives to art. But the number is limited, vacancies come seldom. There was one now, and the director had stretched the rules to hold the place open for him. It was of no avail. A thousand francs are required for entrance, and he could not begin to make up that vast sum. No, it was impossible. To-morrow is his last day of grace, his last opportunity to escape—ah, everything that old age fears the most.

“‘But, my dear Monsieur,’ I said, ‘what will you then do when your failing eyes compel you to stop painting?’ And he answered, ‘I could be one of the

old men who sell post-cards before the door of the château—and I could eat less bread.' I ask you, my friends, have you *seen* those old men?

"I went with him to his garret," he sketched it in quick, picture-making gestures; "a bed—such a bed!—a table—a chair—and everywhere else, copies, copies, copies, copies of that horror. He said no one had bought one for—he would not tell me for the honor of Young France for how many years. He has been living on what he had saved for entrance to the Lavignac Home, and now that is gone."

The cigarettes were not relighted, the foam on the bocks sank down and disappeared, no one moved. Jules's voice went on and on. A handkerchief appeared, and then others. Lachrymose Gallic noses were blown resoundingly. Sure of his audience, Jules now let himself go. "It is as a service to his country—to our country!—that he has spent a lifetime copying that nightmare of a—voyons! I've told you what the picture is from our stand-point of paint and brushes. But listen! This is how he described it to me. 'There is the grand symbolical figure of La République,' he took off his dreadful old hat at the name, 'lifting up France, crushed and despairing, as the last Uhlan, loaded with French gold, rides out of her territory. La République points ahead, above. France raises her head, her eyes kindle, she strides forward on the stony path to rehabilitation. And be-

hind her come the French, soldiers and bourgeois, young and old, men and women, all worn, pale, draped in black, but animated with indomitable courage, struggling forward, the strong helping the weak—ah, M. Dorival, a dream of France, as every Frenchman would have her!’ ”

Jules drew a long breath and flung out his hands. “ Oh, I know we are all moderns, and have no belief in frontiers, and laugh at the old-fashioned jargon of patriotism.” Without transition he passed swiftly on: “ Why, every drop of French blood in me burned as he told me his story. For longer than any of us has lived he has toiled incessantly, not for gain—he was so proud to tell me that even in the days of the picture’s great popularity he had never sold his copies for more than would barely support him. This he has done so that he might go on sending out over the country that he adores—what? Mediocre copies of an execrable picture? No! His vision of the ideal! ‘I am but a dull and commonplace person,’ he told me. ‘In that black hour of France’s need I could help her in no other way. This one thing I could do, and I would.’ He is seventy years old. Mes amis! Frenchmen all!”

A little black-bearded youth from Gascony sprang to his feet, snatching off his hat. “ A collection, comrades!” he cried.

Jules stopped him with a gesture. “ He is not a

beggar, but a member of our own profession, not to be helped with alms!"

They turned disconcerted and inquiring faces to him.

"I will tell you what I want of you," cried Jules, and embarked upon the second half of his plea. The chairs were still drawn close, the cigarettes were still unlighted, the listeners were still breathless, but this time no handkerchiefs followed Jules's eloquence. Instead there were nods, quick gestures of understanding, outbreaks of delighted laughter, and, at the end, a storm of hilarious and voluble acquiescence. Jules rose, hailed a taxicab, and stood with one foot on the step, calculating rapidly: "Eight I leave here—the copies are fifty francs apiece, admission to the Lavignac Home is a thousand francs—twenty are needed. I must find twelve more before to-morrow, and I must select them with care! With *care!*" He gave an address in Montmartre to the *cocher*, leaped into the cab, and was off.

#### IV

They were startlingly diverse in character, united by no visible principle of selection, the interiors visited by Jules during the next four hours. A big, bare studio in Montmartre, with a famous name on the door, where a magnificent old man and his magnificent old

wife laughed, when he entered, at what they called his "prophet-in-the-desert expression," but who did not wait for him to finish his story before they pushed him out into the street with a "Hurry! Hurry! Find the other ten!"

A rose-tinted little salon, near the Parc Monceau, where a rose-tinted little lady in white lace struck her pretty hands together and said, "Off with you to get the other nine!" A quiet little room in the St. Sulpice quarter, the abode of an old priest who went back to his interrupted writing saying, "But yes, of a surety, my son. Waste no more words on me. There are eight more needed." The long dormitory of a barracks where two young men, addressed respectively as Vicomte, and Red Jean, shook his hand in parting with the most correctly English gesture. They were laughing a great deal. One said, "You must make my peace with my royalist family for me!" The other, "A pretty rôle you pick out for your anarchist friends!" but they both called after him, "Six more, remember!" A laboratory in the big Sorbonne building, where two Russian girl chemists, in the midst of a smell that was almost visible, looked up from a test-tube to listen, and went back to it, calling after the departing young man, "We will bring Olga, too, so you need but three more."

He had a rebuff when he pounded in vain at a studio door in a dark hall in the rue Notre-Dame-des-Champs.



A card on the door, which he finally deciphered, told him that Achille and Eugène had gone to the country for a week, and that Maurice owed so much money that he was obliged to hide, even from his friends, his temporary abiding-place. He turned away from this disconcerting information with an apprehensive look at his watch, but a flying trip to one of the boulevard theatres found a dressing-room still inhabited by a tiny creature, all big black eyes, fluffy tulle, and spangled wings. She stopped laughing with another fairy as the young man began his story, and she was crying honestly into a large, red-checked handkerchief when he finished. The other fairy was crying too, so that as the cab rolled away, Jules wiped his forehead. "Nineteen—and I make the twentieth!" he said, and drew a long breath for the first time that evening.

At his hotel in Versailles he left strict orders for an early call at Number 43, but as the garçon conscientiously delivered this to the exasperated occupant of Number 45, it was late when he finished his breakfast and hurried to the château. The copyist was already at work. That is, he perched on his high stool, with a brush in his hand, but he was gazing ecstatically into space. When Jules appeared, he climbed down, hung his palette carefully on his easel, and offered two trembling hands to his young friend. "I have misjudged Young France!" he said fervently. "Her heart still beats true!"



Jules looked a lively interest.

"I have sold two copies of this immortal work!" cried the copyist, his voice quavering. "But that is only a small thing compared to—I sold them to two soldiers of France, two young soldiers such as patriots dream of, full of heartfelt devotion to their country. It broke from them, at the sight of that superb allegory, like a flood-tide! I wished to *give* them copies! But no. They would buy."

"How do you manage?" asked Jules, "about delivering copies?"

"These young men asked me to bring them to-night to the Soleil d'Or."

"To the—?" asked Jules.

"That name is not on it, but all who know Versailles call thus the restaurant at the head of the Grand Canal. The soldiers are to dine there."

Jules nodded, and pulling out of his pocket a long string, proceeded to tie two knots in it. Then he tied a third and announced that he was ready to take that day the copy he had ordered the day before. Even as he spoke, an elderly priest came into the room and began a leisurely inspection of the pictures. Jules retired to the window and waited. After a time he was obliged to step forward to the rescue of the copyist, who was so overcome with pride and pleasure that he could not articulate. "I happen to know, my father," said Jules courteously, "that M. the copyist

is to deliver several other examples of his fine work this evening at the Soleil d'Or. If that would be a satisfactory arrangement for the one you have bought—?”

The priest bowed, smiled, and passed on.

When he could speak, the copyist burst out, “And they say the clergy is not loyal! Did you hear—did you *hear* what he——”

“I heard,” said Jules. He was tying a fourth knot in his string.

The copyist took up his brushes with a dazed air and stood staring before him. A big party of Cook's tourists trampled in and out of the room under the guidance of a vociferously explanatory guide, and he did not stir. A group of school-girls from the Lycée down the avenue came through demurely without arousing him. The little room was quite silent again, when he turned and came uncertainly toward Jules. “M. Dorival, did I dream it—I have dreamed such things so many, many times—if this should turn out a dream, I——” he looked piteously at the other.

Jules forced his voice to a cheerful matter-of-fact tone as he confirmed the good news, and added: “I think I will sit here in the window recess and make a sketch. The glimpse one gets of the Grand Canal is charming.” He felt that to look at the old man's face was an intrusion.

He turned his back to the room, the pictures, and

the sight-seers who came and went. Across his knee lay the knotted string. After a time, hearing a man's voice in the next room, and a woman's answering it, he made two more knots and smiled. A magnificent old couple came in together. Jules sketched industriously during the conversation which followed. After they had gone out he ran over and slapped his old friend on the shoulder. "Do you know who that was? The great M. ——!" he pronounced the name with reverence. "What would I not give for such praise from him!"

There was a rustle of silk, and all April seemed breathed about the room in the odor of lilacs. Jules, at his window, heard a silver voice exclaim over the beauty of the symbolical figure of La République—and he made another knot. The silence which followed this was broken by no word from the copyist, and the young man did not dare to look around.

Another loud-footed tourist party went through. After them came feminine voices talking sharp-pointed Russian. When they suddenly began to use French, Jules added three to his knots. There was still no comment from the copyist.

At noon the young man rose, stretched himself, and asked if the other supposed he could leave his sketching materials with one of the custodians until he returned from lunch. The old man was sitting

on his high stool, his face in his hands. When he looked up, Jules saw that he had been weeping.

“You will pardon me, M. Dorival,” he scrambled down apologetic, “I—it was too much when the Russian young ladies said they would take their copies home to aid in the establishment of a republic like ours.” He was breathless. “That is an honor—a privilege—that I never dreamed—” He put on his hat wildly askew. “I need air!” he cried and disappeared.

As Jules was returning from his lunch, an automobile passed him at full speed. It flashed by in a whirlwind of smoke and dust, but he caught the wave of a tiny hand and a flashing salutation from a pair of black eyes. He found the copyist working like mad, though at the appearance of the young man he flung himself from his stool and across the room at him. “I have sold two more!” he shouted. “Think! That makes more than half of what I need! Perhaps if M. le Directeur knew, he might wait a little longer—” He clutched at his white hair and looked around him with a distraught air. Then without another word he scurried across the room, scrambled back on his stool, and began painting with feverish haste. Jules read dramatically in this the story of his life. He knew no other outlet for his emotion than to paint faster than usual.

Jules took up his sketch again, and the two worked

silently. Cook's parties came and went, groups of school-boys trudged apathetically through under the guidance of bored instructors, and none of them paused in the third small room. The hours slipped by. Jules looked at his watch uneasily and glanced out of the window at the Grand Canal. Before the distant *Soleil d'Or* he could make out a group of waiters setting up an arched canopy over a long table. He smiled. Then he consulted his string and frowned.

"It is almost closing time," said the old copyist. His eyes had the dazed brightness of a child bewildered with joy. "I leave promptly to-day, for I—did you speak?" Jules had given an exclamation. The next room had been suddenly filled with the scuffling of feet and a loud voice. He drew a long breath and put the string into his pocket.

"That must be a new guide," murmured the copyist. "I do not recognize his stories."

The party of sight-seers entered the room, a group of seven young men, evidently art-students, listening respectfully to the explanations of a very young professor, a little, black-haired youth with a strong Gascon accent. Before the painting of a *République* raising up France he paused, took an attitude, and began. Jules felt that there were limits to his self-control and went hastily out into the long gallery. All alone in that great hall he laughed inextinguishably as the reverberations of the little man's impassioned oratory

reached him. There was a pause, a colloquy, then a babel of voices bore down on him, with a clatter of feet.

They were coming back, all of them, and they were dragging the old copyist in their midst. At sight of Jules he broke away from them and ran to him, his thin old legs shaking. "M. Dorival, they—all of them—eight—" It did not seem possible to Jules that the sad, wizened little countenance he had seen the day before could be the same as this radiant face of astounded joy. "And when I told them so," the copyist went on incoherently, "they—" he could not go on, but beckoned the leader to him with, "M. Dorival—an artist also——"

The little Gascon rose to the occasion. "Being all of us devotees of art, M. Dorival—I trust I have the name correct?—we seized upon the opportunity to acquire, each of us, a copy of Monsieur's fine work. Being also devotees of gaiety we had arranged for a dinner at the Soleil d'Or. Monsieur the copyist happening to mention that our purchases were the last which made it possible for him to retire honorably on the proceeds of his industry, we could not deny ourselves the pleasure of making our dinner a festal one in honor of the happy ending of our older comrade's admirable career—a pleasure we would be pleased to have you as a fellow artist share with us."

Jules accepted gravely, and added that he happened

to know that several other of the copyist's patrons were dining that night at the Soleil d'Or, and that they would doubtless consider it a privilege, as he did, to join in honoring so faithful a servant of their glorious country. With that he tucked the old man's arm into his, and bowed profoundly. The Gascon bowed profoundly, the eight burst into cheers, escaped the wrath of the custodians by prompt flight out into the park, and laughing, singing, prancing, swept down to the Soleil d'Or.

## V

The dinner was a memory—a memory which the copyist declared fervently was beyond anything which Paradise might have to offer him. He still sat under the awning of the Soleil d'Or, at one end of the long table, with the eighteen dismantled and deserted places. A wreath of ivy had slipped to the back of his head and framed his tired old face, set in a white beatitude which was almost stupor. Jules, at the other end, silently reviewed the evening, his black eyes sparkling with reminiscent hilarity. It had been beyond anything he had hoped. Different incidents of the improvised program of celebration rose before him with a vividness which sent him into fits of inner laughter. That he should have lived to hear the Vicomte de Presle declaim an ode to the tricolor! Had it all been a



tipsy hallucination or had the Princess Olga Karakoff eulogized the glory of the Republic in the past, and Jean La Cloche, that reddest of anarchists, responded with a prediction of the Republic's future lustre! That the most famous champion of the Church against the State should have been toast-master and should have called for such speeches! And that moment when the undisputed head of their profession had advanced to crown with a wreath the white hairs of a man who had spent a long life in scattering abroad—Jules bowed his head in his arms and shook with mirth at the recollection of the face of the magnificent old painter when he looked at the twenty copies standing all in a row.

But nothing—nothing!—could equal the finale. Jules was almost of the opinion of his old friend that Paradise itself could offer nothing more delectable than the spectacle of that motley assemblage of ultrasophisticated and disillusioned skeptics, adorned lavishly with red, white and blue ribbons and flags, standing about the table, hand in hand, shouting out the “Marseillaise” at the tops of their voices.

He looked down the table at his old beneficiary who, quite exhausted, had fallen asleep, with his head on a bouquet of violets presented by the two Tanagra figurines who, as France and La République, had so delighted the company in an improvised pantomime dance. Jules grinned widely at the recollection. He went around the table and took the old man's purse



out of his pocket to count the money in it. There were fifteen hundred francs. He slipped it back again with a nod of appreciation. "They are good souls, all of them," he said aloud, and stood looking down in a sudden musing reverie. A gust of warm air brought to his keen young senses the pungent aroma of awakening life. He stepped from under the awning, out of the glare of the lights, and found himself in the midst of that silent miracle, a night in spring.

Above the tracery of the trees, misty and veiled with opening leaf-buds, the innumerable stars gazed down at their reflection in the quiet water. There was not a sound, but he was breathed upon by a thousand faint odors and wandering breezes that shook him like little twanging touches on his heart-strings. At first, with his painter's instinct, he matched himself arrogantly against the incredible harmony of the night's black upon black. "Thus! thus!" he thought, "could I reproduce that effect, this shadow, that lessening of the dark's opaque mass." He flung his challenge to the night with a sweep of his sensitive painter's hand.

The night answered nothing, holding its breath in a pause so expectant that the young man heard his heart beat loudly. Then there fell about him suddenly the final benediction of his genius, that exalting, humbling divination of the whole, which transforms the thinker into the philosopher, the painter into the artist. He did not sink to his knees, but he took off

his hat and gazed up at the stars, his face as white and radiant as they.

He looked back at the copyist, asleep in his chair, his old face still ecstatic. "Ah, who are we to judge of good and bad?" said Jules lightly, although his voice was not steady. "Perhaps—who knows—if one knew all—perhaps one might see that the old man's work has been as good as—the best!"

## A SLEEP AND A FORGETTING

HIS was not one of the usual cases of failure of memory, written up picturesquely in the newspapers. After his sojourn in chaos he did not return to life as an unrecognized bit of wreckage, to be sent finally from the hospital without a label. Every one knew all the details of the accident, and knew him to be Matthew Warren. And yet when the doctor, the well-known James Farquhar, M.D., who was the closest friend of the injured man and his wife, pronounced the acute danger past and said that he might be allowed to see his family for a moment, Matthew Warren looked dully at the handsome woman and the two blooming children who, showing a frightened tendency to tears, came to the private room at the hospital to stand by his bedside. "Who are those people?" he asked his nurse, with the weak curiosity of a sick man, losing interest as he spoke. His wife drew back quickly. Dr. Farquhar motioned the visitors away. He did not seem surprised. From that time he was constantly in the sick man's room.

It was not until several days later that the slowly rising tide of Matthew Warren's vitality reached the point where he felt the significance of his condition.

He woke from sleep with a scream which brought the watchful doctor to him in a bound. "Who am I? Who am I?" he called wildly; and then, controlling himself with an effort, clutching at the doctor's arm, his teeth chattering loudly, he added, "I'm very s-s-sorry to trouble you, b-b-but I seem to have h-h-had a nightmare of some s-s-sort, and I can't—I can't remember who I am."

Two months later, when he seemed quite himself again physically, the doctor, having exhausted all other devices, resolved to try taking the sick man home. Perhaps, he argued dubiously, the utter familiarity of his surroundings might speak to his clouded brain. The experiment was tried. Matthew Warren, to all appearances restored to perfect health, went along docilely with his old friend, whom he continued to treat as a new acquaintance. He stepped into the train with no surprise, looked about him quietly, opened a window *en route* with a practised commuter's knowledge of the catch, and talked, as he had ever since his recovery, calmly and simply of the every-day objects before him. He was especially interested in the first signs of spring in the early April landscape, pointing out to his companion with great pleasure the gray sheen of pussy willows and, as the train approached the prosperous suburban region, stretches of brilliantly green lawns.

As he walked up the well-raked gravel of the drive-

way toward his own expensive house he might have been the old Matthew Warren returning, as usual, after his day in the city; and coming to meet him, as usual, was Mrs. Matthew Warren, looking very picturesque in a dress he had always especially admired.

She advanced slowly, shrinking a little, very pale. She had never recovered from the shock of meeting those blankly unresponsive eyes at the hospital. It had wounded and withered something deep in her. Dr. Farquhar looked at her keenly, noting with disapproval the signs of suppressed agitation. He regretted having undertaken the risk of the experiment.

Matthew Warren lifted his hat as she drew near. "I hope you will pardon our trespassing upon your beautiful grounds," he said. She winced at the distant courtesy of the gesture and his accent. He went on, "My friend has, I believe, some errand bringing him here." He put on his hat, stepped a little to one side, to allow his wife and the doctor to walk together, and in an instant was absorbed in the green spears of the daffodils thrusting their vigorous, glistening shafts through the earth.

The woman questioned the doctor with a mute gaze in which was offended pride, as well as grief and bewilderment. She had been the handsomest girl in her set and unreservedly indulged by her husband throughout her married life. She had been always a perfectly satisfied woman, and something in her

heart had grown great and exacting, which now revolted angrily against this grotesque trial put upon her by fate.

"Let us try the house," said the specialist.

She walked beside him in silence. Matthew Warren followed them slowly, gazing about him at the newly green lustrous grass and at the trees swinging swollen buds in the warm, damp air. He looked curiously young, not so old, by ten years at least, as the man who, three months before, throwing a reckless wager over his shoulders to those in the tonneau, had clamped down the brake which did not work.

"Jim, I thought best not to have the children here," whispered his wife to the doctor.

He nodded assent. "One can never tell how it will affect him. It has been an especially hard case, because the mere mention of his lost identity throws him into a fever. Otherwise he has been quite reasonable. You must remember that it is absolutely essential to keep perfectly calm yourself. He is a very, very sick man."

Mrs. Warren glanced at her husband and shivered throughout all her big, handsome, healthy body. She seemed to herself to be in a nightmare. It was all incredible. That she, of all people, should be in such a situation!

The owner of the house stepped up on the broad piazza and looked admiringly at the view of the Hud-

son, the view which he had discovered, and for the sake of which the house had been located where it stood.

"What a splendid stretch of the river your piazza commands!" he said pleasantly, to his hostess, as the three stood expectantly before the door. She looked at the doctor and opened the door without speaking, motioning her guests into the big living-room, all in leather shades of brown and tan, with coals shimmering in the fireplace Matthew Warren had designed. Again he broke their silence with a pleasant comment:

"How superb those tulips are! They are more like fire than the fire itself." He glanced casually, indifferently, into his wife's face, then at the doctor evidently with a moment's wonder that he did not introduce the object of their call, and then away, absently, out of the window. A lilac bush grew near it, and with an exclamation of delight he sprang up to examine it more closely. "Some of those buds are opening!" he announced joyfully to the two who watched him so narrowly. "I see a real little leaf—oh, and another!"

He was answered by an hysteric scream from his wife, and whirled about in astonishment to see the doctor motioning her sternly to silence. She clapped her shaking hand over her mouth, but she could not repress another scream as she met her husband's politely concerned, questioning eyes. And then sud-



denly she took matters in her own hands. She flung aside the doctor's detaining arm and rushed toward the sick man, crying out:

"Matt! Matt! come to yourself! Look at me! Why, I'm Molly! I'm Molly!" She threw her arms around his neck, sobbing furiously.

Almost instantly she recoiled from his rigid, unresponsive body as violently as she had flung herself upon it. Matthew Warren did not seem aware of her at all. He stood quite still, his eyes turning with a sick slowness upon the doctor.

"*Who am I?*" he asked solemnly. His face and neck were of a dull, congested red, and the veins stood out visibly.

Dr. Farquhar, making the best of a bad turn of events, decided to risk all on a bold stroke. He advanced and said, clearly and masterfully, "You are my dear old friend Matthew Warren, and I am Jim Farquhar, and this is your home and your wife."

The other stood motionless. His eyes were fixed on a point in space incalculably distant. After a moment he turned stiffly and walked toward the door.

"There is some mistake," he said, fumbling at the latch. "I cannot for the moment remember who I am, but I have never been in this house before, and this is the first time I ever saw that lady." His trembling hands failed to open the door at once, and the trifling delay seemed the match touched to the tinder

of his disordered fancies, for he began to beat on the lock and to scream: "I don't know who I am! Why doesn't somebody tell me who I am? I can't remember who—" Before the doctor could reach him he had gone down in so horridly dislocated and inhuman a heap that his wife ran shrieking from the room and from the house.

His prostration after this second shock was so great that he could not be moved back to the hospital, and he spent the slow month of collapse and utter weakness which followed in his own bed in his own room under the care of two men nurses. His wife had insisted upon men, having a panic fear of a return of his violence. The doctor advised her to keep out of the sick-room, counsel which she seemed not eager to disregard. The children she sent quite away, out of town. In her lonely and frightened days and nights she frequently asked herself with passion what wicked thing she could have done to be so unhappy now! She had a horror of her husband's presence, although she made a gallant effort to conceal this from the doctor, whom she suspected of watching her jealously for a sign of it; and as the master of the house grew stronger, so that he was reported to her up and dressed, she looked forward to the future with unspeakable dread.

And yet, on the day when, evading his nurses with an insane man's cunning, he crept from the house and

disappeared, she led the search for him with unwearied faithfulness, following out every clue suggested to her, setting every possible agency in action, and going unflinchingly with the doctor to look at a corpse recovered from the river. After ten days of this sort of bad dream, Matthew Warren was discovered, not a mile from his own house. He was spading up a bed in the garden of old Timothy O'Donovan, the truck-farmer who supplied the prosperous suburb with green vegetables. As the lost man spaded, he whistled loudly, like a plowboy. The truck-farmer had not dreamed that the battered, muddy, half-witted wayfarer who had asked for work a week before, and who had set himself so vigorously and cheerfully at the tasks given him, could be the wealthy influential Mr. Warren who owned the fine house at the other end of town.

There was a consultation of brain specialists, Dr. Farquhar and Mrs. Warren herself. She was questioned minutely as to her husband's mental habits and tendencies, and finally succeeded in unearthing from her memory, never very vivid about other people's preferences, the fact (perhaps significant, the doctors thought) that after she and Matthew were first married, when they were quite poor, Matthew had seemed to enjoy working the bit of land about their first small home.

"But of course," she explained, "as his business grew so rapidly and took more of his time he did less

and less out-door work. We have had a gardener ever since we lived in this house."

It was agreed that in the break-up of his higher faculties he might have returned with a blind instinct to a youthful latent inclination, and that for a while it was best to leave him where he was and trust to the slow healing influence of time and improved physical health, since all other curative means had failed. If Mrs. Warren felt an involuntary relief at this decision, she hid it deep in her heart, and throughout the discussion she showed herself loyally willing to do whatever seemed best for the man who had been her husband. And so began the anomalous situation which was to last so long that even village tongues stopped gossiping of it.

Mrs. Warren's first distracted impulse had been to take the children and go away—abroad, perhaps. That had seemed to her the only endurable future. But she gave up this plan when the doctor showed a disappointed and sternly disapproving surprise that she "abandon" a man who might be in desperate need at almost any time.

"I see, Jim—yes, of course, I see," she had submissively assented. She cared intensely that those who knew of this crisis in her life should approve her action.

As a matter of fact, her acquiescence to his opinion cost her far less than she feared. The miraculous

capacity of life to renew itself under any and all circumstances came brilliantly to the rescue of a nature normal above everything else. It was not long before she and the children had reorganized an existence which was tolerable at first, and then, as time slid smoothly by without change, not without its great compensations. There was plenty of money, since Matthew's business had been disposed of at a good profit, and there was very little care. As has occasionally happened before to women of her nature, she found a certain unacknowledged satisfaction in being free of the bonds and complications of marriage. There were now only her own tastes and fancies to consult, decisions were made more easily, more promptly, with none of the inevitable adjustments when two were to be considered. The children, ten and twelve respectively, enjoyed perfect health, grew fast, were not troublesome to their vigorous mother, and had absorbing youthful interests of their own. They adapted themselves with great tact and good sense to their peculiar situation. Like their mother, they were large and comely, with a healthfully ready ability to be satisfied with life. It was hard to connect the well-groomed, trimly attired, prepossessing trio, riding and driving about the "residential portion" of the suburb, with the shabby, half-daft hired man in overalls who rarely left the truck-farm at the other end of town. In a surprisingly short time even those who knew of

the unprecedented circumstances came almost involuntarily to regard Mrs. Warren as a highly ornamental widow, and the children as half-orphans.

Not that they themselves had the bad taste to make a mystery of the affair. The sad story was told with a frank sadness to their intimates, and roused among the young friends of the children a sort of romantic admiration for their extraordinary situation. From the first they had all three followed to the letter the doctor's recommendation to keep away from the region of the truck-farm. They depended for news of the sick man upon the doctor himself, who took care to go past the O'Donovan place at not infrequent intervals to inquire particulars of the new "help."

There, too, as frequently happens with busy people absorbed in their own difficult affairs, O'Donovan and his wife adjusted themselves to the singular state of things with a rapidity which astonished them. The half-fearful curiosity they had felt toward the new laborer when they first learned his identity gave way little by little to an unsurprised acquiescence in his kindly, simple presence and his peculiarities. For the second shock, which had come to him during his wife's wild appeal, had, it seemed, been even more violent than the first. He had seemed only to forget his identity before. Now he had lost it. He could not now have opened automatically the window in the commuter's train. That second month of oblivion had



left him with practically no memory of any kind. He not only did not know who he was, but he could not remember from one day to the next. From morning till night he was like other men; but at every dawn he rose up singing, with a mind as blank of past experiences as a little child's.

This was, of course, until a way had been invented to obviate it, the cause of the greatest practical inconvenience, since he could not remember instructions given him the day before, nor even to continue a task half completed. The trucker and his wife had several highly irritating experiences with him, as on the occasion when, having been set to plow a patch in the garden, he went on plowing because nobody told him to stop and he had forgotten orders given him the day before, until he had turned under all the sod of the O'Donovans' only meadow. Finally, applying their Celtic wits to the problem, they took advantage of the capacity of their new servant for fluent reading and writing. They gave him a standing order to carry about with him a pad of paper and a pencil, to set down in black and white every instruction given him, and to consult it at every step. He obeyed this command with a smiling, absent docility, giving, as always at this period of his life, the strange impression of one wrought upon by sweet and secret thoughts. The O'Donovans said that to see him walk across the barnyard you would know he was fey.



After this device was in working order, O'Donovan boasted that no man could wish for better help than this stalwart, cheerful, deft-handed laborer, who loved every plant in the long rows of the truck-farm, worked, whistling and singing, all day long, and never asked for a holiday. For a long time his only excursions away from the farm were on Sundays, when he went with his employer and Mrs. O'Donovan to the little Roman Catholic church set in the midst of the poorer quarter of the suburb. He could not follow the mass, but it gave him obvious pleasure to listen to the music and to look at the priest's robes and the red and white of the acolytes' garb.

Two years after his arrival at the farm he could scarcely have been recognized by his wife and children if they had seen him. Like his employer, he had allowed his beard to grow, a thick mass of brown, without a gray hair in it, although Dr. Farquhar knew him to be nearly fifty. Above this, his tanned, ruddy face and quiet eyes gave no hint of the keen animation and the piercingly satirical look which had been Matthew Warren's.

Timothy O'Donovan and his wife, childless, solitary old people, came to love the kindly "innocent," whom they regarded as a child, almost as though he had been of their own blood. Old Mrs. O'Donovan especially petted him and cherished him, and lavished on him the affection which she had been so ready to give the son

Heaven had never granted her. As she and her husband grew older, and as this adopted member of their family began to seem more "like other people," read books, studied farming and trucking seriously, and recovered something of his shattered memory for every-day events, he was trusted with more and more of the farming and the business. The slow clearing of his mind brought out traces of his superior education, and this, together with a considerable native aptitude for the business, was a great asset to the primitive older farmer. They started tentatively some hot-beds for early vegetables which later grew by degrees to a greenhouse. The younger man, after several years of experimenting, developed a new variety of tomato, especially suited to their conditions. He called it, after Mrs. O'Donovan, the "Aileen," a tribute which pleased her greatly. Not having a name of his own, the assistant took that of his employer, and the newer people of the town thought them father and son. Sometimes he drove the delivery wagon into town to the market, early in the morning, and later, so little vivid did his past seem to the O'Donovans, was sent once in a while to the Warren house to deliver at the tradesman's door their daily supply of fresh salads.

When Mrs. O'Donovan died he mourned her with sorrow so sincere that her bereaved old husband felt him to be the one link which still bound him to life, and seven years later, when old Timothy himself

passed away in the arms of his faithful servitor, it was found that he had left the farm and house to the wanderer who, twelve years before, haggard and nameless, had stumbled desperately up his garden path.

The new farmer was not long to lead a solitary life. A great-nephew of O'Donovan's, a boy of fourteen, left orphaned in Ireland before his uncle's death, had already started out to the States, and four or five days after the funeral he arrived at the house, horribly frightened at everything so strange and different, horribly homesick, horribly alone, and more than willing to accept the instantly offered home thrown open to him by his uncle's successor, whom he thought his own blood relative. When he had recovered from his first panic he proved himself very useful to the solitary man. He was of the shrinking, shy, fawn-eyed type of Irish boy, very handy about the house, "as good as a girl," his dead mother had often said of him, and he took over the domestic end of the new partnership. He proved to have a taste for music, and his guardian arranged for a weekly lesson from a violinist in town. He himself sat in the evenings on the porch, smoking, reading, and listening with a pleased smile to the singing of the fiddle in the room behind him. They were both always in bed by nine o'clock.

Sometimes, for an outing, he took the lad with him

on his trips to town, pointing out, among other objects of interest, the fine houses of the wealthy residents and, on the rare occasions when they were detained so long as to witness the awakening of the suburb, the miraculously well-tailored people who inhabited them. His daughter, after a very successful young-ladyhood competently managed by her mother, was married now to a prosperous, hard-working, commuting banker, considerably older than herself, and lived in a house a little more expensive and very much more in accord with the latest fashions in domestic architecture than her mother's, which was now, in the swiftly advancing American town, one of the "older residences." His son still lived at home, a famous tennis-player and athlete, who occasionally, flanneled to perfection, walked past on his way to the tennis-courts, or, his smooth yellow hair tossed back from his healthy, unexcited face, galloped on his well-groomed hunter past his father's vegetable cart. Mrs. Warren, too, was to be seen not infrequently, as handsome, though not as slender, as formerly, the image of good comfort and good fortune, hurrying from one engagement to another, consulting her watch and tapping a well-dressed foot in impatience at the slowness of her car, as in years gone by. She had never thought, apparently, of seeking a divorce from her husband. Among her numerous friends this constancy was much admired.

These swept by the burly, elderly gardener without a look, quite sincerely unaware of his identity. They relied on the doctor to let them know if the now quite unlooked-for "change" should ever take place, and they all of them led absorbing lives of the greatest interest to themselves.

Dr. Farquhar, whom the gardener had come to know again in his new existence through his visits to the two O'Donovans, always nodded as he passed, and received in return a respectful tradesman's salute.

Of all those concerned he alone continued to be desperately unreconciled to the state of things. His physician's pride had been stung by his professional defeat, which had, moreover, involved the ruin of his dearest friend. In spite of the friendly cordiality of Mrs. Warren, he could never rid himself of an unworthy and unfair tendency to blame her for her own untroubled good fortune. It is possible that he may have felt a vibration from that calm pulse of satisfaction which Mrs. Warren took considerable pains to conceal from herself as well as from every one else. He was frequently called to the Warren house professionally and could not enter that dignified home of ease without thinking bitterly of the man exiled from it and from all his natural birthright, to poverty and obscurity, and grinding daily manual labor. He compared Mrs. Warren's smooth, aristocratic, significant hands with the work-worn claws of the ignorant old

Irishwoman who had furnished so long poor Warren's only contact with the refinements of the world of women. He thought of Warren's own hands, which he had known so sensitive and nervously active, now thickened and calloused, lying half open on his knees, in the dull passivity of the laboring-man. Once or twice the doctor had been compelled to take a meal *en famille* with the Warrens, and the delicately served food had choked him. He remembered that Warren usually nowadays sat down to a single coarse dish of stew, prepared by the little Irish lout whom he had adopted. He looked about him at the tasteful elegance of the spacious interior and thought of the bare four-roomed cabin which now sheltered the master of this house. The faithful friend, feeling Warren's grotesque and tragic fate as though it were his own, had never been able to stay all through one of Mrs. Warren's evening entertainments. The well-to-do atmosphere of expansive ease and affluence in those handsome rooms formed too embittering a contrast in his loyal mind with the imprisoning round of toil of his friend and the rustic companionship which was the only break in the solitude of his life.

Once, as the doctor fled desperately away from a cotillion, and came out shivering into the cold dawn, shrugging on his overcoat and frowning, he caught sight of the O'Donovan vegetable cart making its early start for the market. He stood still in front of the



Warren house, the chilly morning air whipping streaks of red up into his pale reveler's face. The horses jogged by, Warren holding the reins loosely, his powerful body lounging on the seat, his coarse shirt open at the throat. Dr. Farquhar gazed at his weather-beaten face and raged inwardly. As the cart passed the entrance to the driveway the driver glanced up at the Warren house, saw the lighted windows yellow in the clear, blue dawn, and then caught sight of the doctor hugging his Inverness about him. He nodded cheerfully.

"It's a fine morning, Doctor," he called, and passed on.

The doctor heard him begin a moment later to whistle loudly, the sweet, shrill treble piercing the air like a bird's note.

Dr. Farquhar clenched his fists angrily. He thought of the brilliant future which had lain open before his friend, he remembered his absorbing, crowded life of varied intellectual interests, his first promising success in politics, the beginning of his reputation as an after-dinner speaker, his growing influence in financial circles, his notable social gifts, and then his beautiful, faithful wife (after all, she really had been faithful, had not married again), his creditable, highly successful children—and then—ah, what a professional triumph to effect such a cure after so long! The doctor said aloud:



"I *will* go to see that man in Vienna. There's no harm in watching him operate."

Four months later he was back again, and went straight from the station, where he landed at dusk, to the O'Donovan farmhouse. It was early autumn and, although not yet eight o'clock, the first stars were already emerging from a pure, quiet sky. He heard the singing of the violin as he went up the walk, and in answer to his knock young Tim came to the door, the echo of the music on his still dreaming face.

"He's in the garden, sir, the master is, but if you'll kindly take a seat I'll step an' call him. He likes to take one look around before we go to bed. They say around here that he can't sleep unless he's tucked the plants up and given them a pat like."

Dr. Farquhar sat down and crossed his legs. The hanging foot jerked nervously. It was extremely quiet there on the side road. He could hear the distant murmur of the boy's voice and the man's answer. He could count every step of their return as though they were the beats of his own heart—across the soft ground of the field, the dusty road, the hard-beaten path. The big, roughly dressed man stood there before him, looking up at him with a quiet smile.

"Were you wanting to see me, Doctor?" said the gardener.

The doctor rose, breathing quickly, facing the

other's kindly, patient eyes with some nervous irritation.

"Yes, yes—I have a great deal to say to you, Mr.—" He hesitated, balked over the name, used his hesitation as a desperately seized opening, and said, impatiently, "Of course you know that your name is not really O'Donovan."

The gardener turned to the slim figure loitering at the gate and called, "Tim, 'tis time you were in bed." The lad moved obediently up the path, humming under his breath the slow melody he had been playing on his violin.

"All right, Uncle," he said good-humoredly, and disappeared.

The gardener sat down on the edge of the tiny porch. "I take it it is something very particular you have to say, Doctor?" he asked, not without a touch of apprehension in his voice.

The doctor nodded and began to speak rapidly, violently. He had not gone far before the gardener stood up in evident agitation. He shook his head, frowning, and motioned the other to silence.

"I'm all right as I am," he said curtly. "What is the good of prying into what's long past and nobody knows about, anyhow. Such things oughtn't to be stirred up—they only—" The doctor beginning to talk again, he raised his voice to cry angrily: "I don't want to hear any more such talk! 'Tis better to take

things as they are. Nobody is the better for prying into secrets that—”

Dr. Farquhar flew at him in a passion which beat down his opposition. “Will you listen to me!” he commanded in a voice of fury. “Just listen to what I have to say! Almost your life and death are at stake. You *shall* listen!”

The gardener gave a gesture of impatience, but he sat down and did not again interrupt the doctor’s vehement monologue. Occasionally he rubbed his big palms on his knees stiffly. The crickets sang loudly. From up-stairs Tim’s window threw a square of yellow light on the flower-beds in the front yard. His clear alto dropped down to them in snatches of his slowly moving adagio. The stars came out, one by one, and then in clusters, until an innumerable radiant company shone down on the two figures on the porch. The doctor’s harangue drew to a close.

“I have followed your case from the beginning; and although one can never be absolutely sure of the results of so grave an operation, I am *so* certain that I cannot but insist that you place yourself in my hands. When you have come to yourself and realize your lost identity, you will fully understand and share the intensity of my feeling on this point—” He stopped to draw breath, leaning forward toward the man he was addressing, his brows drawn together as he tried to read the other man’s expression. The faint light of the

stars allowed him to see that the other's face showed emotion. It seemed a good moment for a pause.

The light went out in the room above them. The crickets had stopped chirping. It was in an intense silence that the man in the rough clothes turned his head and looked strangely at the doctor. He drew a long breath and said gravely, "Why, Jim, my memory came back more than eight years ago."

## THE LOOKOUT

Imperious Self beyond self that I call my soul  
Climb up into the crow's-nest.  
Look out over the changing ocean of my days  
And shout down to me whither to change my course.  
Warn me of the reefs and bergs :  
Warn me well of the mirages :  
—No, I cannot release you : you cannot rest,  
There is no one I can trust in your place.

## A GOOD FIGHT AND THE FAITH KEPT

IN nearly all of the few cases where any degree of fame or worldly success has been won by the plain people in our valley, the achievement has been made by one of the Wardon family. And yet the Wardons have never been disliked or even envied by their less brilliant neighbors. The life of Hillsboro people is, and always has been, narrow in the extreme; but their acquaintance with it is intensive. They know by word of mouth all about the old events in village history; and so it is that they know all about "old Squire Wardon," who was sent to England to the court of George III, to represent Vermont in the Land-Grant quarrels. They know that he was considered the most distinguished man in Vermont in his day; but they also know that at fifty-five, in the prime of his life and the height of his success, he was found, dead by his own hand, his wrists slashed by the very sword he had worn at court.

And his son, that fine and ardent patriot, Colonel Wardon, who was Washington's well-known friend and adviser—people in Hillsboro know what is not put into the history books about him; that he shot himself

and his wife, to whom he was devotedly attached, and that they were buried in one grave.

It is true that no shadow lies over the career of the Reverend Elnathan Wardon, who became a noted preacher in a great New York church and during the Civil War was sent over to England, like his great-grandfather, to influence English public opinion to sympathy with the cause of the North. His ship was lost on the homeward journey, and a noble light of heroism is shed around his last act, which was to push a negro deckhand into his place in the life boat. The survivors said of him that as the last boat pushed off from the sinking ship, he waved his cap at them and shouted to them "Good cheer!" in a loud triumphing shout which reached their ears even through the storm.

He left a son and daughter. The daughter, brilliantly handsome, married at twenty, at twenty-one was overtaken by the family melancholia, and at twenty-two, in spite of the devoted and tender care of her husband, threw herself and her baby into the Necronsett River. The son went into the then new business of railroading, showed the usual Wardon ability and amassed a considerable fortune, which he lost and made again and lost, after the fluctuating fashion of early railroad speculators. He married Naomi Palmer, one of the nicest girls in Hillsboro, though a poor girl who was then "working out" for her living. She bore him two beautiful children, a boy



and a girl, as clever and affectionate as they were handsome. At forty-six her husband hanged himself from a beam in the attic of his house, where she herself found his dead body.

There is a good reason for the absence of envy felt by Hillsboro people for the Wardon brains and success.

Since Hillsboro is the cheapest place to live in the United States, Naomi brought her two children there, her husband's death having occurred in one of the periods when he had lost his fortune, or almost all of it. She had a tiny income. This she pieced out by doing some sewing, by nursing occasionally, and once in a while by going in to help out at house-cleaning time—all occupations quite in the traditions of the Palmer family, who, though a persevering, much-respected farmer clan, have never had the knack of getting on in the world.

Her daughter Mary looked very much as she had, but that the "Wardon look," as old Hillsboro people called it, rested at times like the reflection of a flame on her pretty, rounded, girlish face. The boy, named after his heroic grandfather, was all Wardon, with clear flashing gray eyes, a mass of straight black hair overhanging a very white forehead, and a tall, upright, vigorous body. His mother adored him as she had his father, and worked as doggedly as only a Palmer could to give him the education which fitted his Wardon brains.

He was a junior at Williams College when his mother fell gravely ill with a sudden malignant kidney trouble which soon developed into blood-poisoning. He was sent for, came in terrified haste, and found her dying, her face clay-colored, her eyes rolled back in their sockets. She could speak but rarely, a few words at great intervals, and what she said was entirely unintelligible to her son.

"When your time comes, Elnathan, . . ." A long pause.

"Yes, Mother. When my time comes? . . ."

"You remember . . . you're not all Wardon . . . the Palmers aren't smart, but they have got *grit*. . . Don't you give up."

"No, Mother," said the distracted boy, holding tightly to her hand, "No, Mother, I won't give up!" He had no idea what she meant to say.

Her last words were: "Elnathan! Elnathan! You fight it out!"

After the cessation of her indefatigable labors, there was not enough money for Elnathan to go back to college; but he found an occupation suited to his capacities and traditions in the office of the Hon. Elias Dallet, the politician-lawyer of the county, and town clerk of Hillsboro. Elnathan was twenty when this arrangement was made and his sister Mary was eighteen. She was engaged to the son of the store-keeper; but until he could earn enough to marry she

kept house for her brother and gardened assiduously. Nobody had such flowers as Mary Wardon. She was devoted to Elnathan and very much in love with her faithful, ardent, rather inarticulate sweetheart.

It is of course understandable that of all the people in the village, Elnathan and Mary were the only ones who did not know the tradition about the Wardon blood. Hillsboro people are not adept in the small amenities of life; but they have a stanch code of humanity and decency of their own and although there was much surmising as to what they might know of the family history it is certain that not one soul, old or young, from one end of the valley to the other, would have "thrown up" to the two orphans what was in every one's mind when the two handsome, vigorous Wardon young folks went by.

Elnathan and Mary knew, of course, about the circumstances of their father's death, because they had been old enough to remember it; but they had never heard how their Aunt Almera died, nor about Colonel Wardon and his wife, nor "old Squire" nor several others, not so well-known, whose lives had ended in the same fashion.

Naturally enough their father had never spoken to his little children of those facts in the family history . . . it is even possible that he himself did not know all of them. They had been brought up on the story of the splendid death of their grandfather, whom El-

nathan was said remarkably to resemble, and on the legend of the family's superior force and intelligence. As they grew older, their mother has hesitated in anguish between the two dreadful alternatives of their knowing, or not knowing; and she had died without making a decision. The brother and sister, brilliantly strong and well, recovered with the heaven-sent resiliency of youth from the shock of their mother's death, and stepped forward into life hand-in-hand, confident, buoyantly expectant.

There was nothing to warn Elnathan when, a couple of years after his mother's death, he awoke one morning to find, quite without reason, a shadow darkening his sky. He lay in bed, looking up at the white-washed ceiling, with the oddest reluctance to get up and begin the day's work, in which he had always had such zest. His mind was full of ideas which had never occurred to him before, not even in the occasional, vague revolts against reality common to all imaginative youths. This was something quite, quite different from the "fits of the blues" which he, like all his contemporaries, had known at times when he was physically slightly under par. There was a taste like ashes in his mouth.

What was the use, he asked himself with the most astonishing bitterness, of getting up to do again what he had done so many times before, what he would inevitably do so many times again. He had never

before thought of the innumerable days before him, and as he contemplated their interminable defile his spirit quailed. He was twenty-two when this happened for the first time, and the thought of the years and months and days and hours which made up the sum of life before him was a crushing load on his shoulders. But he got out of bed finally, with a leap, saying to himself that he must have had a bad dream. He had the bewitched feeling that comes after a very convincing nightmare, and he dashed the icy water in his pitcher over his splendid young body, in an attempt to "wake up."

After a day's unsatisfactory struggle with his listlessness, as baffling as a spider's web across his face blurring his vision, he went to bed at night with the strangest eager anticipation of unconsciousness. To sleep. . . . After all, there was nothing so good as that.

The next morning as he sat at the breakfast table his sister said, "Elnathan, you act kind o' dumpy. What's the matter with you?"

He looked at her, surprised to see that he could not answer her question. "I don't know," he said with a wondering emphasis: "seems as though . . . I don't seem to have . . . Well, I don't know at all!"

"I tell you what," said Mary, getting up from the table, "I'm going to make you some boneset tea.

Mother always said there was nothing so good as boneset tea when folks felt sort of good-for-nothing."

Elnathan's way to the office led across the river, and on that morning for some reason he stopped to lean over the rail and watch the curious little maelstrom made where the swift, cold, mountain stream eddies furiously in and out of a deep fault in the rocky bed. It is called in Hillsboro the "whirl-hole," and it was the place where Elnathan's Aunt Almera had drowned herself.

As he stood there, his eyes fixed on the ominous black whirl of the waters, Mr. Crowell came jogging along, his buckboard sagging under the weight of full grain sacks. Mr. Crowell was the father of the pretty girl whom Elnathan was taking out to dances and church socials. The young man's reverie was so deep that he did not hear the clip-clop of the old horse's hoofs, and only started out of the way when the driver shouted. He looked up then, and for a moment, did not recognize the familiar face. The two confronted each other with alien eyes. Then Elnathan nodded and went back to the rail.

He could not have told what was in his mind. He would have said in answer to a question that he was thinking of nothing at all but the curious, snake-like twisting of the water, boiling up over the edge and ever renewing itself in sinuous arabesques. They

held Elnathan's eyes as the crystal ball does those of a person hypnotized.

He did not know how long he had stood there when he felt some one shake him, roughly enough, by the shoulder. It was Mr. Crowell, come back, who now stood beside him, his face rather white and very sober. "Look here, Elnathan," he said, "you go 'long about your business. Don't stand here, staring at the whirl-hole. It gives me the creeps to see you." He had been one of the boys who had recovered Almera's body thirty years ago.

"Oh, all right, Mr. Crowell," said Elnathan, readily enough, "I didn't realize how long I'd been here. I haven't felt just right, the last few days."

At this, the farmer turned paler. Of the two he looked vastly more disturbed. "Say, Elnathan," he burst out on the impulse of the moment, "I wish't you'd stop going with my Phebe!"

Elnathan stepped back, a slow red rising to his cheeks. "Why, Mr. Crowell!" he cried in a hurt voice, "what's the matter with *me*?"

The older man did not meet his eyes, but he went on desperately, "Nothing's the matter with *you*, of course, but—Well, now, Elnathan, if things were the other way around, and you had a daughter you thought everything of—would *you* like her to marry into the Wardon family?"

Elnathan turned pale with anger and surprise and



said with intense indignation, "Why, what's the matter with the *Wardons*!"

Then the farmer knew that Elnathan and Mary knew nothing, and, his heart in a turmoil of pity and fear which he could in no way bring out into speech, he gave the boy a rough, kindly touch on the shoulder, and ran hastily back to his buckboard.

Elnathan went on to his office, drawing deep indignant breaths. His task that day was to search the town records to verify a doubtful line at the top of a big wood-lot which was changing hands. As he handled the big leather-covered books and turned over the worn old deeds, he was passing from anger to acute wonder.

But there was no one he could ask. For the first time it seemed rather odd to him that he and Mary were the only Wardons in Hillsboro—in the world, so far as he knew. His pride would let him ask no one but a Wardon. He was fumbling with an old deed, slit at the cracks and yellowed sallow with age, when it occurred to him that he did not need to ask any one. He had all the town records there at hand, everything. And the church records were kept there, too, in the only fireproof safe in town. There was even a manuscript town history, begun a generation ago by an antiquarian of that date, at the paper cover of which Elnathan had often glanced carelessly. Mr. Dallet was away for the day. He would have plenty of time.

The young man put his hand to the ponderous door of the safe and swung it open. . . .

That evening as Mr. Crowell was in his barnyard, milking his cows by lantern light, he was startled by the sudden appearance of Elnathan Wardon. The farmer sprang up, his milking stool falling over against the cow's leg. She stepped to one side, uneasily, and turned her great eyes, lustrous in the lantern light, upon the two men.

"Mr. Crowell," said Elnathan steadily, "I've come to say I've been looking up things since I saw you this morning. I know what you mean. It's all right. I won't go with Phebe any more. You might just tell her,"—he faltered for the first time—"you might just tell her that I won't ever go with any girl again."

The other man took Elnathan's smooth hands in two horny fists. They were trembling and so was his voice: "Elnathan, I hadn't ought to have said what I did to you. I won't ever feel right about it." He tried to peer into the boy's face as he spoke, but they were outside the dim circle of light cast by the lantern, and under the great, somber vault of the sky Elnathan was nothing but a strange, hard voice.

"Yes, you ought, Mr. Crowell," he returned; "not only for your Phebe either. For me. For Mary. Somebody ought to have told me before." He released

his hand from the other's nervous clasp and stepped back farther into the darkness. "Somebody ought to have told my father before I was born," he said; and was gone.

The next morning, when Mary took down from the shelf the broken-nosed teapot in which she had put the boneset tea, her brother cried out in a sudden horror; but when she faced him, astonished, even a little alarmed by his violence, he controlled himself, nodded his head, drank his cupful and smiled at her. It was the first act of his new life.

When he went away that morning, he kissed her good-by and let his hand rest for a moment on her shining bronze curls. Caresses were so unusual in their tradition that she wondered again, after he had gone, what was the matter with Elnathan.

He went straight from her to her betrothed, and drawing him from the store out upon the street he began to speak in his strange, hard voice. But young Burton broke in on him at once, with a pitying sympathy, anxious to spare him his recital. "Oh, I know all about that, Elnathan. My folks don't like it very well, but *I'm* not afraid!"

Elnathan was brought up short, "You knew?" he said.

"Why, everybody knows," said the other wonderingly. "How can they help it? But you needn't think anybody thinks a mite the less of you and Mary.

'Tisn't *your* fault! And Mary is— Why, I wouldn't give up Mary for *anything*!”

“But you oughtn't! Don't you see how . . . it would be too dreadful if . . .”

“Now, Nathan, you don't need to say a word! Don't you suppose all the old women in town have said everything to me there is to say? I hold—I've told them so, too,—I hold that it's *my* business and nobody else's!”

“But, Mary, . . . Mary doesn't—”

“No, she doesn't, and I'll kill anybody that tells her!” cried her lover stoutly. “Now, Elnathan, don't you go putting ideas in her head! If she never knows, she will be all right. I guess *I* can take care of Mary!”

Elnathan went away, his brows knit. As he went up the steps to the office an old man, a friend of his mother's, nodded to him and remarked how early the trees were losing their leaves that autumn. Elnathan shrank back without answering, stung by a sudden thought. The old man knew—everybody knew! But the next moment he straightened his shoulders, nodded gravely in return, and said yes, the big maple in their yard was almost bare.

Elnathan's time had come and he had begun to fight it out.

During the next winter, he was, so far as his external life was concerned, chiefly watchful of Mary, surrounding her with an atmosphere of loving, cheer-

ful care which made her tell her lover once that Elnathan was getting to be just like their mother. He was making at that time great strides with his law studies, and Mr. Dallet said in another year he could take his bar examinations and change the shingle to "Dallet and Wardon."

One evening in early spring, as he sat watching Mary set delicate little stitches in a part of her trousseau, she laid down her work and, drawing a long breath, sat in silence, her eyes bent on the floor. After a time Elnathan stirred uneasily and scuffled his feet. The girl did not look up. He spoke warily, "Mary, the daffodils in that bed by the brook have begun to come up."

She sighed, took up her needle again and said, "Have they?"

Elnathan's heart gave a great leap. "Don't you feel well, Mary?" he asked in a casual, light tone.

"No, I don't seem to," she answered. "I don't know what is the matter with me. Seems as though everything was too much trouble for any good you get out of it."

Elnathan heard a great hammering in his ears. "Come on! Let's go for a walk!" he cried cheerfully, springing to his feet.

She shook her head, "You go if you want to," she said, "I don't feel just like taking a walk." She leaned her head back, and closed her eyes.

Elnathan stepped steadily down the path until a turn hid him from the house. Then he put his head down and ran, like a man running a race, to the Burton house. "Come quick, Horace," he said. "Mary is—I guess you better go and spend the evening with Mary."

He went back with him until he saw through the window that the girl sat just where she had. Apparently she had not stirred. Her long slim throat, stretched back, glimmered whitely in the twilight.

When young Burton came out at ten o'clock, Mary's brother rose up from the shadow under the maple tree. "Is she all right?" he asked.

"Of course she is!" answered her lover pettishly. "Why shouldn't she be! Everybody gets a touch of spring fever, once in a while. You make me tired, with your notions!" When Elnathan went in, Mary had gone to bed.

The next afternoon, as he came from the office, he passed swiftly over the bridge as was his habit now, looking neither to right nor left. But after he had passed, some sixth sense made him turn and look back. There, on a great rock by the water's edge, sat Mary, staring down at the water.

Elnathan had been fighting his own demon all the day and his melancholy now rose up in him like an overmastering sickness. He had a great longing to go to her, put his hand in hers and go down into the

river together. Then there would be no more need to fight. Then there would be rest. . . .

She started when he came down to her, but showed no surprise. "I saw you from the bridge," he said.

"I thought I'd come down and see how much the spring rains had swelled the river," she said; "seemed as though I could hear it roaring, clear up to our house; but now I'm here, I see it's not so very high, I must have been mistaken about hearing it." She gazed down at the water. "I never was so close to it before," she said in a muffled voice.

She leaned from the rock, and Elnathan leaned with her. . . .

Then he sat up straight and said quietly, "Come, Mary, we'd better be going home. It's time to get supper, and likely Horace will be there." He put one hand under her arm as he spoke, and half lifted her up. She came with him docilely enough. When they were nearly home he said, "Mary, I want you should promise me something."

She looked at him surprised.

He tried to smile. "It's just a notion of mine. I want you to promise me you'll never go down near the river again—*never!*"

She hesitated. "Why, Nathan, what a funny idea! But I don't mind promising if you want me to."



"Do you promise, so help you God?" asked Elnathan solemnly.

"I promise," she said; and then, wonderingly, "Are you afraid I might fall in?"

Elnathan wiped his forehead, "Yes, I'm afraid you might fall in," he said with a great indrawn breath of relief.

That evening after they had made the round of the garden and brought up some tulips from the bed by the brook running at the foot of their yard, they sat on the porch while Elnathan told some cheerful stories about an eccentric client of Mr. Dallet's. After a time, Mary said, "Elnathan, do you ever get real blue and no especial reason for it?"

"Why, yes, Mary, sometimes," he answered, catching his breath and shuddering at the memory of the winter which lay back of him, "I suppose everybody does."

"It's awful, isn't it?" she said, "I've heard real sick folks say that everything tasted the same to them, so they didn't care if they never ate . . . like chips, or sawdust it is, instead of good food. I know what they mean. I feel just so, some days lately . . . 'seems as though I didn't care much, *what* happened!"

"You and Horace gettin' on all right?" asked her brother.

"Oh yes," she said.

"Well, I don't see that *you've* got anything to be blue over," he declared; "the prettiest girl in town, and the smartest, with the nicest young man, and he just crazy about you!" Even as he brought out this enumeration, he winced at the hollowness of his tone, and felt in his heart an echo of her impatience with the futility of his words.

"Oh, there's no reason for it! That's the worst of it. That's what makes it so queer. It's just that I get to thinking, what's the use of keeping at it all the time, the way we do. You just go along, day after day, and by and by you die. What's the use of bothering so much?"

Elnathan came and stood close to her chair, his hands on her shoulders. "That's a wicked kind of talk, Mary," he said severely. "You mustn't say such things."

"Why not?" she challenged him listlessly.

He struggled to put his creed into his answer, to make her understand what was swelling his heart to an almost unbearable anguish of endeavor—struggled and failed. "Because that's giving in!" he cried, striking himself on the breast, "because anybody that's got any grit, *don't* give in. Just that! They fight it out."

She looked at him, unkindled by his heat, wondering at his vehemence. "I don't see what you care, if it is giving in," she said.

He thought afterward, a thousand bitter times, that then was the time to tell her, to rouse her strength by the knowledge of her peril. But he felt bound; after all she belonged as much to her future husband as to her brother. Perhaps Horace was right. It might frighten her to tell her.

In the morning when he awoke she was not up. He knocked at her door. There was no answer, and when he burst the door open the room was empty. He ran out of the house wildly, meaning to go to the river, and caught sight of something white . . . there . . . down in their own little brook.

He gazed from afar, his flesh creeping. That was Mary. She lay, face down in the thread of water . . . quite still.

Elnathan's hands groped backward for the support of the wall. His tongue was thick and immovable in his mouth. His knees smote together. If he went there to her, he knew that he would lie down, like her forever. And he would go. And that would be the best. . . .

There rang in his ear the cry, "Elnathan! Elnathan! You fight it out!"

He stood up. His hair, his clothing, were drenched through with icy sweat. But he walked down to the brook, lifted the poor girl-body and brought it back to the house and to the empty bed.

It was the bravest deed of a life not lacking in courage.

It was a year after this that he passed his bar examinations, passed them so brilliantly that old Mr. Dallet smote him on the shoulder in congratulation and told him he was a Wardon all through. The younger man looked rather sick at this, and seeing his look the other bit his tongue and turned away.

Elnathan went out to Cemetery Hill that afternoon and put some daffodils on Mary's grave. He surprised Horace Burton there, who said to him, rather shame-faced, "You won't understand my being here, Nathan. But I'll never forget Mary, no matter how . . ." He had recently become engaged to Phebe Crowell.

Elnathan answered, "Oh, yes, I understand, Horace. It's better so."

Horace hung about uneasily, "Come on home with me, Elnathan," he said, "I'm going by the short cut through the pines. Come as far as the turn of the road anyhow." Elnathan shook his head. One of the hardest things he had to bear was the clumsy good intentions of people like Horace. But he allowed himself no petulance. "*I'm* all right, Horace," he said briefly. He sat down and leaned his back against the tombstone. Below him the valley lay, an iridescent mosaic, shimmering in the spring sunshine. Back and forth, across the brown patch at his feet, toiled a plow-

man and his team. The sound of his exhorting shouts rose faintly to the ears of the men on Cemetery Hill.

"That's Jed Burrit, doing old Marvin Spenser's plowing for him," said Horace. He, too, sat down, resolutely.

Elnathan nodded. His mortal sickness lay heavy on him. The man would plow, and sow and reap, and what would be the end of it all?

The tree above him would be opening its pale green leaves when the man was dead, as it did now. All the man's sweat and effort. . . . It would be as though he had thrust his hand into water and withdrawn it. There would be no trace of him left. It would be as though he had never gone through the bloody agony of living.

There was a long silence. Then: "He's got his little girl with him," said Horace, leaning forward. "Now he's hitching up to go home, I see her there in the wagon. Jed's wife is dead and he has to take the kid around with him. He thinks an awful sight of her."

Elnathan closed his eyes. Not only labor and effort were as naught, but passion, affection, care—they were like the wind that blew and was gone. He thought of Mary lying asleep so close to them, with the only feeling he ever had for her, a bitter envy.

The young man beside him, appalled, like any normal organism by the fact of silence and immobility,

spoke again with the insistently cheerful note which Elnathan loathed. "Well, Nathan, I sh'd think you'd feel pretty well set up in business. Old Man Dallet says the lawyers up t' Rutland said that nobody'd passed such a good examination, not since they've been the board. Looks like pretty smooth sailing ahead for *you!*"

Elnathan sickened at the folly of these words. He had long ago learned that before the assaults of his enemy none of the lesser expedients availed for an instant. He had but one weapon,—and to lift that took every drop of his blood,—his sheer resolution to resist, his revulsion from the indignity of succumbing, his senseless fury of determination to fight it out.

At no time, even in his quite lucid moments, could he give himself any reasoned ground for this determination, but somewhere in the depths of his heart it lay, and by sweating blood he could upheave it like a great bludgeon and batter back the forces of darkness.

But on this day, a turning-point in his life, his spirit fainted before the recollection of the bitterness of the battle. Spring was always a hard time for him. The sweet, wild rush of returning life always carried his sick fancy forward with irresistible impetus to the black chasm which awaited it all in the end. And the fact of his acceptance into his profession affected his imagination powerfully. It marked with a dramatic

definiteness his entry into life. Nothing now stood between him and the first of the interminable steps to be taken along that dusty highway. Sitting there with the spring sunshine pouring the strong wine of its anointing on his black hair, his young blood coursing smoothly in his young veins, he felt the will to resist dissolved away. He had been like a man clinging with bleeding hands to the face of a cliff, and enduring from one moment to the next. Now he felt his hold relax. Quite quietly, he would soon open his hands and sink into the merciful abyss. . . .

His companion, forgotten beside him, gave a great start. "What's *that!*" he cried. There had been a crash, a shout, and then a long, rolling, furious clatter of hoofs. A man's voice came wildly up to them, "Stop them! Stop them! Molly's in the wagon!"

Both the young men sprang to their feet. "Jed's team," cried Horace breathlessly; "if we cut through the pines—" He began to run as he spoke, but he was thrust to one side and almost thrown down by the great leap forward of his companion. Elnathan was off like the wind. Horace had never seen any one run so fast. He sped after at his best speed, but came out on the main road to find everything over, the team halted some distance beyond the turn, shivering, lathering, and pawing, Elnathan hanging at their heads, one leg swinging horribly, the frightened child quite safe, but peering strangely over the edge of the wagon



at her rescuer, and screaming. When Horace came up, Elnathan looked at him blackly, gave the reins over to him, and, with an expression of stern disgust on his face, fainted quite away.

From that day on, Elnathan walked with a cane, but although he cut short any reference to the deed with a somber intolerance, he bore with him to his last day the fame of his action. "As brave as Elnathan Wardon," people said, and say to this day. The boys in the village watched him as he limped by, and wondered if when *they* grew up, *they* could be dragged by a team as far as from here to the store and still hang on, though one leg was broken in three places.

Little Molly Burrit always said that "the man" was laughing aloud when he ran out of the bushes beside the road and jumped for the horses' heads; but nobody believed her. People said the child's wits had all been scared out of her. She didn't know *what* she saw!

After Elnathan recovered from his long convalescence he lived on in his old isolation. He had a habit of taking long walks at night, and many of the Hillsboro children, waking from a sound sleep, heard his hurrying, uneven footsteps, the only sound in all the silent valley. "He always walks as if something was after him," one of his neighbors said. His endless flight from this invisible pursuer aged him before his time. At thirty-five his black hair was thickly streaked with

silver, and before he was fifty his stern face bore many of the harsh lines of actual old age.

When Mr. Dallet died Elnathan succeeded to his position, and in time to the "Honorable" before his name. Everybody felt, however, that there was a difference between the ways the two men wore that title. When a man spoke of the "Honorable Elnathan Wardon" the original gold of the battered old title glimmered through the dust and mud which as a rule dishonor it. He had an impatient indifference to the opinion of his fellow-townsmen, and they gave him every honor in their power. He was many times representative from Hillsboro and before his death had been for years regularly returned to the State Senate where, aloof, ungenial, stern, he dominated the garrulous politicians to a show of decency.

But it was as a lawyer that his influence was strongest. The tradition of his scornful distaste for any shadow of fraud, backed up by the example of his success, was the background against which, for years, every young lawyer in the State studied his profession. He was as eloquent as his grandfather, the preacher, had been, and people came from far to hear him sum up a case, to see him stand up, his handsome, deeply-lined face set and hard, and pour out the close reasoning, the vivid antithesis, and pungent aphorism which made him almost irresistible.

There is a curious story told once in a while, by

older people of Hillsboro about one of his speeches. One day in the full swing of his argument, proceeding as usual from point to point with close-knit, logical cohesion, suddenly with no change of voice or manner he began to talk strangely, to talk nonsense. Before people knew it, he was saying, “. . . and why should we care? What would it matter if the earth should open and every one here be swallowed up. We would all be at rest. And the balance of the world would not swerve by a hair's breadth . . . except that there is no balance . . .” and then, the startled stir in the court-room making him aware of what he was doing, he had stopped, passed his hand over his eyes, and without a break or pause, swept into the expected peroration of his summing up, a peroration as swift, as keenly conclusive as anything he had ever delivered, and which carried the jury with him to a unanimous verdict in his favor.

Afterwards, knots of people, gathered on the steps of the court-house, asked each other, bewildered, what had happened. Some professed that nothing had happened and challenged anybody to remember exactly anything unusual that had been said. Others, though certain that there had been a period of something queer in the lawyer's summing-up, found that, when they tried to tell what it was, they had no clear idea. A few, who claimed to remember exactly what Mr. Wardon had said, quoted the words, and were refuted

by their manifest absurdity. The general opinion was that people who made a great many speeches, sometimes said things they didn't mean . . . just words . . . sort o' got the habit. At any rate, nothing of the sort ever happened again.

He had always continued to live alone in the old house where he and his sister began life together. It was there, in the rich glory of his youth that his fate had fallen on him, there in the low, slant-ceilinged bedroom of his boyhood. It was there that he had given all the strength of his manhood to his daily and hourly battle, there, up and down those narrow halls and plain, poor rooms. And it was there, when he was sixty, as the first twilight of old age dropped about him, that his ultimate victory announced itself.

It was nothing at first, *nothing*—and yet everything! He had been sitting alone, forcing his mind to concentrate on a legal point then in debate, when there had appeared for an instant on the far horizon of his consciousness, gone before he could fix it, ever so faint, ever so impalpable a loosening of tension. It was not physical—his fingers clutched at the chair arms on their lifelong habit; it was not mental—his attention had not swerved for an instant from the iron grip in which he held it to the point in hand. But it had been!

Like the distant, deep boom of floe-ice, breaking up at the end of the Arctic winter, it was too faint

to be audible to the ear of the lonely, frost-bound anchorite, save by a vibration to which, for an instant his every fiber responded. As though startled by a distant cry, he had almost said aloud, "What was that?" but did not, because he knew at once that nothing had happened.

But that night, for the first time in thirty years, he went to bed without his exhausting, midnight flight abroad. He did not even think of it until he was in bed and had put his candle out. But he was asleep before he could wonder.

That had been the beginning.

After the beginning there were corners turned, milestones passed, at first almost as imperceptible as that first step along the new road; but at last there came moments when the man himself guessed that he had turned about, guessed, and finally knew where he stood. The first of these moments was when he found himself thinking with the keenest vexation of the cumbersome and thrice-confounded confusion of the laws of his State. Like most of the older States, it depended for its legal decisions on a contradictory medley of original constitution and laws, and a mass of statutes since enacted, many of them erratic and obsolete, but not repealed.

All his life the lawyer had encountered this exasperating condition and had felt toward it merely another throb of his all-enveloping weary disgust. It

was an epoch, the moment when he found himself objecting to it with an angry petulant impatience, and turning over in his mind with genuine interest a quickly-conceived plan for its reform. His impatience, his anger, were like wine to him. To feel an unforced interest was like opening the windows of a prison to a June west wind. He had an instant of such intensity of life as few people ever know.

Naturally enough, having other things to think of than Lawyer Wardon's odd ways, it was some time before his townspeople noticed that the quick, uneven rhythm of his nightly walks was not so frequently heard; and it was many months before his neighbors turned their eyes an instant from their absorbing occupations and noticed a change in the aspect of their fellow-townsmen. They were not sure of it then . . .  
". . . 'sort of seems to me," said one, "that Lawyer Wardon don't look so queer as he used to." And, "I hadn't noticed" was the indifferent comment of the other, who had been struggling with blight on his potatoes. "Don't he?"

Nor did they see any significance in his action, a year later, when he began an agitation for the codifying of the State laws. The Honorable Elnathan had always been a lawyer. What more natural than his taking part in the new legal commission, of which he was head and to which he gave many years of his later life, and such a free, spontaneous action



of his sternly disciplined mind as no one who knew him could conceive.

He knew, at times, the grim old bachelor, sitting alone with his law-books, a thin, high, heady joy in the vigor and accuracy of his brain, such as a skilful fencer knows in the gleaming sureness of his thrust. He had plowed and sowed and watered and weeded, and now he was reaping his harvest. But it was a harvest so impalpable that for long no outward sign of it appeared.

When, however, at sixty-five, the lawyer made a great gift of nearly all the considerable property he had earned, for the erection and support of a county hospital, all the village and State broke out into amazed exclamations as at a sudden and bewitched transformation of character overnight. But nobody ventured on any astonished comments in his presence. Indeed, nobody dared to speak to him about it at all, not even in thanks, except Horace Burton, who was the nearest approach to an intimate the lawyer ever had.

Horace had grown stout and dull and absorbed in the grocery business; but there had never ceased to echo in his ears the recollection of an incident in his youth. On the day he heard that the donor had asked that the new hospital be known as the "Mary Wardon Hospital" he sought out the lawyer with a remark which, when he came to phrase it, quavered on his



tongue. Elnathan had never been easy to say things to, even when he was an untried boy.

But as he hesitated, looking into the face of his old friend, he had the oddest feeling that he was looking at somebody else. . . . That was not Elnathan's mouth, as he had seen it in the courtroom so many times. His eyes had not had that curious, quiet look. . . .

"Did you want to speak to me, Horace?" asked the lawyer. And that was not Elnathan's voice.

"Why, yes, Nathan. . . . I had thought I'd—" The grocer boggled miserably. "It's about this hospital. I wanted to tell you how glad I am you named it after Mary. I've never forgotten Mary a minute. I've often wanted to talk to you about her, . . . but you never mentioned her name. I thought . . ."

Mr. Wardon understood. "No, I never spoke of her," he said gently. "But now, . . ." He said, with a sudden yearning in his voice, "Horace, Horace, it's all right!"

But the great moment of vision was not vouchsafed to the grocer. "That's good," he said vaguely, with no resonance in his voice. "My! Ain't it hot for so early in the season!"

The Honorable Elnathan Wardon watched him retreat, with the look of fathomless patience which had insensibly during the last two or three years emerged from the powerful sternness of his worn old

face. It was to be expected. He had lived alone through the years of his warfare. He need expect no companion vessel to hail him in the haven to which he had won.

And for the most part he needed none. The sweetness of his tranquillity filled his life for him, like a golden cup, brimming with a precious liquor. Although it was so late in his life, he came to know some new interests—books, the life of the village, the marriage of the young people. He grew fond of gardening, too, as his sister Mary had been, and his strong, bowed old figure was frequently to be seen, hoeing and digging among the thrifty rows of his cabbages and beans. He had an especial fondness for spring-time, in those years, and was never so gentle as during the week when the daffodils bloomed.

Just once, toward the end of his life, there emerged from out his quiet, patient face of selfless strength, the old fierce, warrior countenance. He had chanced to overhear some one say that young Marvin Spenser was excusing himself for his periodical sprees on the ground that the Spensers *were* that way, always had been drunkards, 'twan't any use for him to try. To the young man, sauntering along the village street the next day, the old lawyer had appeared with so terrifying a face of high resolve that Marvin had started back as though threatened with bodily violence. But the old man had only beckoned him to follow, had

taken him up-stairs to the office and locked the door behind them.

Marvin was there a long time, and when he came out, although a crowd of his cronies had gathered around to chaff him, they shrank back in silence at the look on Marvin's white, awed face, and let him pass without a word. Nobody ever knew what the lawyer said to the young man; but every one in Hillsboro knows that from that day to this Marvin has never touched another drop.

Elnathan was sixty-nine when he fell suddenly ill. When the doctor pronounced the disease pneumonia and sent to Rutland for a trained nurse, there was almost no hope. The sick man fought his disease valiantly, however, and kept it at bay long after the doctor had given him up.

He had lived so much alone that few of the village people came into the sick-room, although nothing was spoken of in the town, during that last week, but the danger of the man whom they all knew to be the greatest among them. A stream of inquirers came and went at the front door to get the latest news of his condition, but when the end came, there was no one with him but the nurse.

"He's gone," she said, with sober professional calm, turning to the doctor, "just now, as you came in the front door."

The doctor stepped to the bed, lifted the strong, fine

old hand and laid it down. He nodded his head at the nurse. "Yes, he's gone."

"How much vitality these older country people have," she said; "I never knew a pneumonia case to put up such a fight!"

"Well, he came of a strong stock," said the doctor, who was a newcomer in town and knew nothing of the Wardons but the report of their ability and success. "His family is one of the best we have." He corrected himself, "I should say 'was' one of the best. I don't now think of any who are left." After a moment's reflection: "No, there isn't one," he said. "He was the very last of the Wardons."

## FROM ACROSS THE HALL

THERE was a note of intense seriousness in the mother's voice as she announced the news. Mr. Parker shifted his cigar and folded his newspaper to a fresh page.

"Oh, I guess it'll be all right," he responded vaguely to his wife's tocsin of alarm.

"I hope so!" she answered dryly.

"She's had lots of callers before" he remarked, "and I don't believe this——" His voice died away in an inarticulate murmur.

"Boys she's grown up next door to, and went to High School with!" Her gesture dismissed them, as negligible quantities.

"Oh, she's only a child herself, Ellie is, if she *has* had time to outgrow this town's small social life and take to college-settlementing and——"

He left his sentence unfinished again. Some one had said of the Parkers that they were never known to complete the sentences they began to each other.

The mother's rejoinder was a laugh. She evidently considered that they were now embarked upon one of their usual evening conversations, for she began a leisurely, reflective monologue.

"Isn't it odd," she mused, not looking up from her sewing, "how you *can* see the funny absurdities of children and laugh over them, even when at the very same minute you're simply agonizing over the soul-destroying possibilities involved in those same qualities?"

The silence from the other side of the table made her look up quickly. "You're going to *sleep!*" she accused him.

He started and opened one eye. "I'm not if *you* can help it, am I? What's the matter? The plumbing again?"

"Nothing so important. It's only whether the man your daughter is falling in love with is a fit person for her, and whether he's falling in love with *her!* And it's been going on for the whole last fortnight, ever since you've been away."

"Well, keep your bulletins up to date, Mother dear," he said whimsically. "You know I can't know anything about my daughter but what you tell me."

"There's just enough truth in that to make angels weep!" she cried vehemently. "And if we had it to do over again I think I should make you give up lawyering and take to shoemaking, with your shop right in the house here, so that Ellie could grow up to know you by sight at least."

"Ah, but nowadays shoemakers don't see their children, either. They work in factories."

"Well, anyhow"—the mother refused to be drawn into a side issue—"she met him at the Powells' two weeks ago, and he called the very next evening. She put off Charlie Atwater, who *was* coming that evening, so she could see him without another caller. I heard her 'phoning a fib to Charlie about having a headache. I never knew Ellie to do such a thing before, and it made me wonder. And then when this Mr. Thayer came to call, I knew."

"I don't doubt it." The father aroused himself for a slow laugh. "I don't doubt you knew what the trimming on the bridesmaids' dresses was to be as soon as you heard the door-bell ring."

"Well, you'd have been struck as speechless as I was if you'd seen the expression on Ellie's face when he first came in." Her voice, always vibrating sensitively to the emotion of the moment, began to tremble. "Why, it made my heart stand still. The poor child might as well have called out to him, 'Come and take me!'" She began to laugh shakily.

"My only comfort is that men are such fools they never see anything. He probably thought her greeting was very cool, and wondered if he'd been too forward to call so soon. Oh, if it weren't such a tragic matter," she concluded, "wouldn't they be too deliciously absurd, young people in the mating years! Do you remember the first evening you came to see me when we——"



Her husband laughed out loud.

"I was just thinking of that. Did you look at me as though you called out——?"

"Oh, I was crazy about you from the first," his wife avowed; "but *you* were *you*, and who knows who this man is?"

"But by your own reckoning they've only known each other two weeks. Aren't you going pretty fast to——"

"He's called five times, gone to church with her once, they've taken two walks together, and they've met 'by accident' three times as she left the college-settlement house to come home."

The father laughed at the exactitude of the information, but he drew his bulky figure upright in the chair.

"Who *is* this energetic Thayer person?"

His wife gave a gesture of triumph at his awakened attention and proceeded succinctly to make the most of it.

"I understand he comes of a Cleveland family. His father is a professor in the Western Reserve, his mother was a Detroit girl, and she's now president of a woman's club in Cleveland. He graduated from the Ohio State University, and took a lot of electrical work at the G. E. in Schenectady, and he's now assistant superintendent of the street railways here at a salary of two thousand a year."

Mr. Parker gazed at his wife wide-eyed.

"And when was he born, and where is he at this moment, and what is he thinking about, and——"

"He's right across the hall in the parlor this minute, calling on your daughter, and as to what he's thinking about, I'd give a good deal to know."

The father's weary impassivity was not yet wholly stirred.

"Well, we're plain, Middle Western American parents. There's nothing for us to do but to keep our hands off, is there? And, anyhow, all that secret-service information of yours makes him out all right, doesn't it? Just about our kind of folks, and——"

"I said I *understood* all that!" his wife interrupted. "I don't know if any of it is true, do I? And even if we should have found out that his father is not a drunkard or he an embezzler, we don't know whether he's the kind of person to make Ellie happy, do we?"

The father looked across the table into his wife's eyes with the rich interchange of unspoken meanings of those who have lived their lives in close communion. Then, although he still spoke lightly, he patted her shoulder before he left the room.

"Well, Mother, I'm afraid if you've taken the trouble to gather all that report, there's no good excuse for my not at least crossing the hall to have a look at things—oh, I'll make an errand," he laughed, pausing at the door and cutting short the suggestion he read in his wife's hastily upturned face. "I'll—I'll—"

why, I'll go in to see if the man fixed that gas-lamp all right."

When he came back he evaded for a time the inquiry in his wife's eyes. He let himself down heavily into his chair and sighed, the fatigue in his face deepening as though a curtain were drawn across it.

"That trip to Cincinnati gets harder every time I take it," he said.

"Well?" asked his wife.

"Oh, I don't think he'll bite,"—the lawyer picked up his paper again—"but what Ellie sees in him——!"

"Oh, then, you see, too, that she——"

He would not admit it. "I don't see anything. *You* said she did."

"Well, she does."

The mother summed it up with a somber finality on which she rested, even though her husband apparently sank back into his former slough of callous abstraction.

"Oh, I guess it'll be all right," he said again, beginning to read.

It was a week before she knew that his indifference was a screen to hide from himself his own concern.

"I ran into some Cleveland people to-day, Mollie," he told her, "and asked them casually about this young Thayer. They gave him a very good name. Seemed to like him. Said he showed promise."

"How did *you* like him?" asked the mother after a pause.

"I hated him!"

She was not startled by the suddenness of this outburst of parental jealousy.

"Yes, I know. I feel that way myself sometimes; but if Ellie likes him, and if he's all right— How did you really like him?"

"Oh, well enough. He didn't seem very much at his ease with me, so it was hard to——"

"Didn't he?" she broke in eagerly. "Well, that's a good sign he's serious and not just amusing himself."

"Looky here, Mother," he said resentfully, "anybody'd think we wanted to get Ellie off our hands instead of— As if she wasn't good enough and pretty enough for anybody in the world."

"That doesn't make any difference. Being pretty—being good—being *anything* doesn't make any difference."

"What does?" he asked with an air of being about to run her triumphantly into a blank wall.

"I don't *know* what does. It's all a chance."

He smoked silently, considering this statement. When he spoke there was in his voice the note his wife loved, the steadfastness on which she had leaned all her life. "Was it all a chance with us?" he asked gravely.

She dropped her sewing. "Oh, I knew when I first saw you. But suppose you hadn't liked me that first evening?"

"I think I 'knew' as much as you did, and that was mighty little. It's something you have to allow time to, for it to grow—. But oh! does it seem possible? Why, it's not more than last week that she was just learning to walk. Do you remember? How she put out her hand for the cookie, and then before we knew what she was doing had run across to me? How proud and frightened she looked. Do you remember how her eyes shone, and she panted and clung to my knee?"

"I remember," said the mother.

They both looked up as the door opened.

"Mother," asked the daughter, "would it be all right for me to go skating a while with Mr. Thayer? All the crowd are down on the lake in Monett Park this evening."

The young man consulted his watch.

"I promise to bring her back safe no later than ten," he said, laughing a little for no reason.

"Why, yes, I think so," consented the mother. "Put your fur around your neck. You're hardly over that cold yet."

When they had gone she was the first to break the silence.

"Her crowd will notice that. It's the first time

she's ever really gone out that way with a young man who isn't one of her old boy friends."

The father made no comment. His eyes were on an article about the currency.

"Did you notice," asked the mother, "that she looked just as she did years ago—the time you were speaking about. Did you see how bright her eyes shone, and how quickly her breath came, and how proud, yet——"

He laid down the paper. "Don't!" he cried. "You mean that this time it's *away* from us she's——"

They said no more, but after a time he moved his chair so that his hand rested on his wife's.

By the end of a fortnight, however, a reactionary change of mood had come over them.

"We're as bad as any other absurd anxious parents," said the father cheerfully. "Just because a young man comes calling on our daughter once or twice——"

"If he comes to-night it'll be the eleventh time," she interposed accurately.

"Well, eleven times." He conceded it and still clung to his point. "That's no reason to——"

"No, of course it isn't," she assented. "And Ellie is a great deal too young to be thinking seriously of such— Why, she's only a little over twenty!"

"You were——" he began.

"But that was different." She silenced him quickly. "Ellie told me to-day she thought nobody ought to marry before thirty. She may seem to like him, but anybody can tell by her attitude that she'd be *horried* to be expected to marry him. Not but what he's well enough, too."

The father unfolded his paper with a return to his settled middle-aged confidence in the stability of things which had not been his since the subject was first broached. The mother began the accounts for the month with a cheerful dash of her pen.

"I suppose it'll come some time," she said, "with such an attractive girl as Ellie, but there's nothing in *this!*"

There fell about them one of their peaceable mutual silences, broken only by the rattle of the newspaper and the scratch of the pen.

The door-bell rang. The mother listened with uplifted pen-point. "That's his laugh."

"What of it?" the father reassured her. "How many times did you receive calls from that Hewitt boy I used to——"

She laughed. "Yes, we're a pair of——"

"Don't count *me* in! I always said it would come to nothing."

The turn of his phrase seeming to be definite proof that it had come to nothing, there was another silence, serene and companionable.



Then, looking up from her ledger, "Do you know, they say that nowadays they are putting babies into short clothes when they are only two months old," remarked the mother.

The father laid down the paper and surveyed her solemnly.

"Well, Mollie Parker!" he said accusingly.

"What is it?" she asked startled, not at first catching his meaning.

His tired, heavy face was softened by a slow smile.

She denied the unspoken charge with all her quick, hot vehemence, instantly thereafter admitting it. "How in the world could you know I was thinking of——"

He confessed humorously, "Because just at that moment I was noticing an advertisement in the paper of an apartment-house on Elm Street, and was wondering how they would be if Ellie and——"

Elliptically she let him see her greater quickness, and that she had outrun him.

"No, the rents are too high there," she said with all gravity, although the crows' feet at the corners of her eyes deepened with suppressed laughter at herself. "On two thousand a year you can't afford—and, anyhow, in that house three rooms out of six open on an airshaft."

He broke into an open laugh. "You are too good to be true!" he cried.

She started guiltily.

"Hush! That's the parlor door. Here comes Ellie. You don't suppose he has already——"

The door opened, the daughter came in. She looked at her father, time-beaten and gray, his unshapely bulk heavy in his chair, absorbed in the financial pages of his paper, and at her mother bending her faded face above the household accounts.

"I don't suppose you know where our volume of Keats is," her clear young voice rang with accusing certainty.

"No, my dear," said her father mildly. "I haven't looked inside Keats for a great many years."

"I remember dusting it when we cleaned house"—her mother glanced up from her addition—"but I haven't seen it since."

As she looked for it, running her finger along the books, the girl explained: "Mr. Thayer wants to read me a passage from the *Endymion*. He's very fond of Keats—oh, here it is, back of one of father's law books—no, it isn't—yes, it is—he's very fond of all poetry—and literature—and art——"

After the door had closed an abysmal silence lay on the room.

Finally, "How do you feel?" asked the mother.

"Absolutely crushed by realization of our crass, gross, materialistic view toward——"

She feared he was carrying it off too lightly.

"Well, it was horrid in us to think such things about such unconscious young people. Ellie'd have a right never to forgive us if she knew."

He tipped his head back against the chair and gazed reflectively at the ceiling.

"So they've gotten along to reading poetry. Who did *we* read, Mother?"

She answered both the apparent and the hidden meaning of his speech. "Yes, doesn't it bring it all back to you? I've thought more about those days since this began than in years before. Why, we read Longfellow, and Tennyson, and Lowell——"

"And Owen Meredith."

"Well, not Tupper, at least!" she laughed. Then suddenly serious, even wistful, she continued: "Why *don't* we read poetry any more?"

"Grown-ups live on beefsteak and potatoes, not on chocolate éclairs," he told her bravely.

"Ah, that's bluster. You know it's sad we don't. It comes over me with a shock. To have lost poetry out of our lives!" She could not palliate the matter. Her husband lifted himself heavily from his chair and stood smiling down at her. She gazed back, sure as always that he had an answer to her every problem.

"You child," he said, putting his hand on her gray hair. "Must you have it out of a book? How long have we been married? How long have we still to live—together?"

Ten days later. "He's going away on a business trip," the mother told him the instant they were alone together after dinner in the library. Her haste seemed to indicate her sense of some hidden importance in the news.

"Well, what of it?" he asked. "So am I."

"Everything!" she cried dramatically. "Letters!"

"I suppose so," he admitted slowly.

"I know so! They've known each other six weeks—oh, a very concentrated six weeks, and an absence at this time—it'll decide everything for them. One says more in letters—one keeps them and reads them over and makes sure they're real."

He minimized the significance of her tidings to calm her agitation over it. "Be sure you pay as much attention to mine," he said, laughing. "I notice my departure makes no such stir in the world. Oh, come, you'll find when I come back that nothing so vital has happened to them after all."

But when he returned, even his sluggish masculine inertia before sentimental crises was not proof against the tragic atmosphere of his house.

After the lamentable affair which was his first dinner at home, "Good heavens! What's happened?" he burst out at his wife, as soon as Ellie had pleaded a headache and gone upstairs.

"It's too horrible!" she cried, catching his hand in hers. "Life is. There is so much more suffering

than joy. Oh, it is not worth the agony of living it!"

He had not seen her in this mood of angry misery since the days of Ellie's childish illnesses, when the mother's anxiety tore at the too responsive strings of her heart till the pain seemed more than she could bear. His easygoing indifference dropped from him at the sight of her. He took her hands in his and held them closely, waiting for the relaxation he knew would come at his touch.

"What has happened?" he said again, very quietly. She began to whisper rapidly.

"He hasn't written her at all, not once, and she had sent him three letters before she realized he was not answering them. Of course I don't know what she said in them, but I think he must have almost spoken out before he left and she has written accordingly, and now thinks he is laughing at her. My Ellie! My little girl!" She was shivering and panting as though it were she whose maiden shyness had been violated. "I could kill him! I could kill him!" she ended.

He had a dozen reasonable explanations ready at once. "Why, how you women go off at half cock! Perhaps he is sick—or was in a train wreck. There's a train wreck somewhere every day. Or found his father at death's door. Give a man a chance. He's not been gone more than ten days——"

"Fifteen to-day," she corrected him.

“ Well, even if worst comes to worst, if he *is* that sort of a trifle, it’s better for Ellie to have found it out now than——”

“ Oh, yes, yes, yes, I would say so, too, if it were not for her having written those letters—such letters as I know from her face she did. It is criminal to allow innocent, ignorant girls such liberty as we American parents do. All her life she will be shamed before herself for those letters.”

Still, his matter-of-fact suggestions—even more, his mere presence close to her again, reassured her. “ Perhaps he *is* sick,” she said, and then with a maternal savagery which made first her husband and then herself smile, she added, “ Oh, if he had only been killed in a train wreck! It would be such a *sufficient* reason.”

But the next evening her husband said, not sparing her, and exercising that prompt honesty they had so finely succeeded in keeping toward each other in every crisis :

“ No, he is not sick, and he wasn’t in a train wreck. There is nothing the matter with him. I looked up Peterson to-day. I knew he was just from Cleveland, and asked him point-blank if he had seen young Thayer. He said he took lunch with him yesterday at the club.”

There was no outburst of indignation from the mother. Looking across the table at her he saw the slow tears creeping from under her closed lids.

“They are not for Ellie,” she told him. “They are for me. She hurt me so to-day it seems my heart must burst. I could not *bear* it, to see her going about so still and white, with that look on her face—her girl’s face that should be— I knew she would be happier for speaking out. I yearned so toward her. I put out my arms to her and said, ‘Ellie, darling, *tell* Mother! Don’t keep it so to——’” Her voice failed, and when she went on it was so brokenly he could scarcely hear her.

“She pushed me away—she thrust me from her, Ellie did, so that it hurt me here.” She laid her hand on her breast. “She pushed me away and ran upstairs and locked her door as though I were a spy.” She went over it again like a litany of misery. “She pushed me away—her little hand that used to lie on my breast when she was nursing—my own baby——”

This time the father had no quick comforting words. “I dare say she finds even herself in the room with her an intrusion on her these days. She must fight it out.”

“But it would do her *good* to confide in——”

“It would do you good to have her, you mean,” he said with unsparing gravity.

“But it is wicked for her to draw away from her own mother. What have I done to deserve it!” she cried in hot self-defense. “I never kept anything from mine. If one is not close to one’s own mother,



what are human relationships worth? We are all in solitary imprisonment else——”

“That is *your* way. Perhaps she has some of me in her. I never could confide in any one, not even my own mother.”

“You never kept anything from me, did you?” the wife flashed out in jealous apprehension.

He looked at her, his faded brown eyes steady under the grizzling eyebrows. “No,” he said gently; “no, Mollie, I never did.”

When the full meaning of this came home to her, “Oh!” she cried, springing up and going to him, “Oh, it *is* worth while, life is!” And on this high note of triumph they ended their talk that evening.

The next evening she swept him off his feet by the exuberant exultance of her relief, vexed at his slowness in understanding the incoherencies of her story, flaming impatiently at his man’s demand for a full explanation before he would believe. It was all a mistake, he gathered, even his trained sense for facts picking out with difficulty the main outline of things, “he *had* written, the letters had been addressed to North Hamilton Street instead of South— Good heavens! Why had they not thought of that! The letters had piled up at the main office till some mail clerk with a glimmering of sense had noticed them, and they had all come in a bunch to-day, —piles of them, *millions!*” —she reveled in their num-

ber with oriental extravagance—"more than one for every day he had been gone. And though Ellie had told her nothing definite, it seemed clear that he was wild with anxiety because she had stopped writing after those first three letters. And that morning she had telegraphed him—the reason, I suppose—and had had a telegram that he was coming at once, and she was expecting him any minute now——"

At the ring of the door-bell the mother started, her hand going to her heart, her gray hair shading a quick flush like a girl's. "Oh!" she cried. "Do something, quick! Read me—read me an article on the tariff, and *make* me listen. And I—I will darn some stockings."

It was upon this scene that the door opened, a half-hour later, and "Oh, my darling!" cried the mother, her arms about the girl, blind to her companion, and deaf to the incoherencies he was stammering to the father.

After it was all over, the mother, mastering her voice enough to speak, said, "There, go back to your lover, dear. He and your father went across the hall. And send your father back to me. I know you want a quiet time to say your first good-night to each other." Still the girl lingered. It was only when her father's step, dragging a little with fatigue as usual, came toward the door that she lifted her head from her mother's lap, and rose from her knees. Her mother

looked at her eyes, starlike through tears, at the red, perfect flower of her mouth, at the translucent brilliance of her cheeks. "My baby!" she cried with incredulous pride. "My baby girl!"

By the door the girl met her father, and from his arms she looked up into his face, all its heavy sagging lines close to her fresh bloom, and then back at her mother's thin, sallow cheeks. In her exclamation there throbbed a sudden burning sense of her own present ecstasy which brought with it a final fragrance of despair.

"Oh, I'm so *happy*! I suppose that never again," she cried, poised for flight on the threshold and quivering like a wind-blown flame, "never again can I be so happy as to-night!"

The father looked after her in a silence which was broken by the mother's exclamation, "Oh, he is not good enough for her! He is not good enough for her!"

The father dropped into his chair. He was very pale. After a pause, "My little Ellie," he said under his breath.

A sudden hysterical laugh broke into the hush. "What do you think she said to me, the *darling*? She said she supposed it was a very great surprise to us."

"Did you hear," he asked musingly, "what she said as she——?"

“About never being again so happy——”

He nodded. She was silent. The room about them seemed vibrant with a thousand ardent, full-veined memories of the past and with the rich certainty of the future.

“Come here,” called the father suddenly. He took her spare, worn body into his arms and bent his gray head above hers.

“Ah, she has a lot to learn!” said the husband to the wife.



## VIGNETTES FROM A LIFE OF TWO MONTHS

IN the beginning he was almost always immured in the profound sleep of new babyhood. Only hunger, the master of us all, could penetrate into that impregnable fastness. Even pain was frequently not able to awaken him. His mother was often astonished to hear him crying with a twinge of colic and yet to find his eyes still tightly closed. But his mother was astonished at nearly everything he did.

A few weeks later there began to be brief periods when he was awake, and yet neither hungry nor in pain. This was usually when his mother, who was advanced and modern and did not rock her baby, laid him back in his little bed after a meal. He lay there in his long garments as motionless as a cocoon, his eyes wide open and fixed on nothing at all, in a seraphic beatitude. He was warm and dry, and his stomach was full of good food. What a heavenly boon was life!

There came other advances—most important of all was that he learned to distinguish light from darkness quite plainly. This was a great richness added to his life. In the evening when he woke up for the

last meal of the day he lay and watched the brightness of the lamp for some time before hunger drove him to writhe his face into a wrinkled, toothless mask like that of a Japanese devil, and emit the scream which always brought his mother to him in a rush. And in the daytime the ceiling's immense expanse of whiteness was a source of vast contemplation to him.

But for the most part he lay sleeping, and grew and grew and grew.

. . . . .  
His mother was growing too, almost as fast as he, and at times she suffered terribly from growing pains. She did not know she was growing, nor did she recognize her discomforts as growing pains. She only knew that it was a time of tremendous stress for her, and that her life was strangely compounded of excitement, drudgery, happiness, revolt—and in those first few weeks, fatigue, penetrating fatigue, that was often as acute as the sharpest pain.

She had undergone a bewilderingly sudden promotion in life. Nature, with lavish generosity, had advanced her from the small and insignificant rôle of being the Most Important Person in the World to the very center of the stage, and had assigned to her the star part of a Useful Member of Society. The elevation was so sudden as to be staggering, and although she grew, grew faster than ever before in her life,



there were moments when she was too small for the greater rôle and horribly ill at ease in it.

Ever since the nurse had gone she had been too frantically busy to make head or tail out of the maze of her contradictory emotions. Everything was so different from what she had planned during the long, still months of expectancy, when looking forward to this, she had laid out her life with ordered and complacent competence. She had decided firmly that she would avoid the usual mistakes made with first babies; that she would not lose her head; she would not let the newcomer usurp too large a place in her own important life; she would not sacrifice her husband for the child; she would take care that she and the sacred House did not degenerate into slovenliness . . . ah, on her cramped, make-believe stage with what smug self-assurance had she played her part!

But now, set suddenly into the vast spaciousness of the first big reality of her life, grappling with the first real responsibility she had ever known, with the first real work she had ever done, how unavailingly she struggled to master the situation! There was no denying that it mastered her.

During those first weeks, before her strength had altogether come back, to take care of the baby, to feed him, to be up with him at night, to wash his clothes, to attend to the necessary sterilization of utensils used near him, to read and re-read the maxims

of the Book on the Rearing of Babies, to solve the ever-fresh problem as to what could be the matter with him when he fretted or cried—all this kept her every capacity in such distracted employment that if she had been asked outright she could not have told if she were happier now that he had come.

But for all her bewilderment, one new certainty was stamped upon every fiber of her mind and body as nothing had ever been before. There was at least one thing sure in all the dizzyingly shifting values of life. She must take care of her baby.

It was one of the principles of her life to utilize every moment, and she had in the beginning various schemes for self-improvement during the half-hours of the baby's meals. She could hold him with one arm easily and hold a book in the other hand. Half-an-hour seven times a day—why, it was a prodigious length of time! She could do something really worth while in the reading line. She could, perhaps, at last read Gibbon. That would be an achievement!

In the scheme of things other plans were made for her. She found that her usually well-trained mind was not always under control. There was, for all its blankness, something compelling in the unwinking gaze of the baby's bright, wide-open eyes up into her face. In spite of what the learned books on infant physiology said, it seemed as though he *could* see her.

Sitting thus, returning his steady gaze with another which became little by little as steady and as widely spacious, the regular tug, tug, tug of his little mouth, hypnotic in its regularity, beating like a quiet pulse through all her body, her spirit was liberated for whole moments from the petty restlessness of the mind and from the narrow bonds of consciousness.

Once, as she sat thus, mute, motionless, her head bowed over the small head on her bosom, brooding in the silence of the empty house, there shimmered before her eyes a dim vision of that "meaning of things," that ultimate reason for existence which had always eluded her anxious, groping search.

And the first word of her new knowledge was *Renunciation*, an humble realization that she herself was never to know the meaning of that vast insoluble riddle. But this did not mean hopelessness and inaction. It meant only that at last she knew that the key to the riddle was too huge for her to grasp. The united hands of a perfected and purified race alone could wield that mighty implement and learn the secret of existence. And in that ultimate great achievement she would have her share.

She knew now that her share was to be a strong and tempered link in the long chain which began in the first stirrings of the primordial sea and led . . . she would never know where. The generation before her

had somehow formed her so that this vision was hers. And now she must do her part in opening the eyes of the next generation to a vision greater than she would ever see.

She looked down at the little head at her breast. Here was the next link in the chain. Would she be strong enough and wise enough to do her share of the forging and tempering which would make it worthy of its divine task? Would she be able to keep her vision in all the wearying, harassing details of the daily struggle—so many days, so many years? Whence would come her help?

The room was silent for a long time.

Then the baby sighed, turned away his head from the breast and fell asleep. His mother kissed his fuzzy little head reverently and lifted him into his crib. Her face was shining. She had been praying.

. . . . .  
They were not, however, by any means always occupied with lofty visions, those half-hours of the baby's meals, those seven daily periods of intense immobility of body. Not infrequently they were accompanied by that spasmodic activity of mind known as fretting. It was always then, chained to her chair as she was, that she remembered the things she ought to have done and had neglected. Indeed wherever she sat down, there were plenty of such things staring her in the face—not to speak of the

myriad others out of sight in the refrigerator, full of odds and ends of food which needed care; in the closets, full of haggard toilettes with hooks off and buttons missing; and in the bureau drawers full of undarned stockings and ribbonless lingerie.

That day, the hour for the baby's nursing, arriving as it always did with appalling unexpectedness, she had caught him to her, at her desk where she sat trying to answer some of the piled-up letters there. The hungry baby began to feed with gross haste, gurgling and swilling down his milk like a little pig, his fat hands pommelling her breast. As she sat thus, submitting to his demands, conscious that her belt was askew, and her finger-nails a disgrace, her tired eyes narrowed to a frown as they roamed around the room. The plants in her window-box were drooping with thirst. The dust on the piano, her sacred piano, was like a furry gray coat, and other dust lay in rolls under the couch. And that Ghirlandajo Visitation—Heavens! Would she *never* remember to straighten that picture! She had noticed how crookedly it hung, the first day she had been brought downstairs after the baby came, the Sunday when the baby's father had carried her down in his arms. Yes, she had noticed it then, six weeks ago, and she had been so harried and distracted ever since that she had not had time to straighten it. And that was the way everything went! An ugly vertical line of tension

stood between her knotted brows. She looked very plain, and ten years older than she was.

She glanced down at the baby. The sharp edge of his hunger being now slightly dulled, he was nursing more quietly, with regular, business-like tugs, his eyes half-shut with voluptuous enjoyment, his tiny, rose-pink fingers opening and shutting with a gesture of supreme satisfaction. His hand aimlessly wandering about in the air served the purpose of safety valve to ecstasy as do the whiskings of a nursing lamb's tail. As she looked, this wandering little hand encountered the rose-pink button that was his nose, and helplessly responsive to every external stimulant, closed about it firmly. This cut off his breathing and, forcing him to breathe through his mouth, made him draw away from the breast and gasp. He did not like this at all, and looked accusingly at his mother as he slowly returned to his interrupted meal. His mother smiled dimly to see that, not knowing that he had either a hand or a nose, he blamed her for the interruption.

As his loud, regular gulps began again, the little pink hand began again its accompanying aimless wanderings, and encountering once more the same softly rounded knob, once more closed about it tightly. The baby was outraged at this second attack upon his liberties, and frowning fiercely, made a determined stand, clinging tightly to the breast, turning red and stubbornly continuing to take into his mouth great



gulps of milk which he was quite unable to swallow. His mother began to shake with laughter to see him. Her mirth shook him off from the breast again. He fell back scowling, and emitting a gush of warm white milk, and glowered with the heavy-jowled severity of a hanging-judge at his mother's sparkling face of April laughter.

She wiped his milky mouth and her mirthful eyes, and drew him again to her—"But if he does that again, I shall die, I know I shall die!" she murmured to herself, reverting to the vernacular of her school days.

As the baby settled down seriously again to his life-work, the corners of her mouth twitched with light-hearted malice to see the little hand, opening and shutting, begin its aimless wanderings. The two former experiences had worn a tiny brain-channel in the baby-mind—the little hand groped about almost purposefully for that soft knob, and encountering it finally, clutched it with spasmodic energy. All the baby's latent, manly self-assertion and dignity sprang to life. No, this was too much! He would resist to the death this insidious, this treacherous foe who sought to deprive him of his darling dinner! His determination to resist, tightening all his body to active tension, tightened also the hold of his little fist.

Enthroned upon her lofty pinnacle of adult omniscience, his mother looked down upon this epitome of



his misguided race, and knew a moment of Olympian hilarity.

The baby turned red, he turned purple, he writhed upon his mother's knee, but all the more firmly he shut his jaws together upon the breast, his fist upon his nose. And he met defeat with a Promethean outcry at Fate, dropping back from the breast with an agonized howl of rage, his pointed red tongue quivering in the toothless cavern of his mouth.

His mother did not spring with sympathetic haste to console him. No, quite callously, she let him cry. The room rang to his yells, and to laughter, cloudless, blessedly foolish laughter. All alone in the disordered, dusty house, she laughed as she had not laughed since she was a little child herself.

Her eyes were bright, her face flushed—she looked ten years younger than she was. She had again quite forgotten to straighten the Ghirlandajo Visitation.

One day Beauty entered the baby's life. She came as she often does, an unexpected herald of delight, treading softly a new path, all her own. In the baby's case she reached him through the medium of a thermometer—an ordinary wood-and-glass thermometer.

His scientific mother had hung this instrument from the canopy of his little crib. She did this so that it might register the temperature of the exact spot inhabited by the baby, and she consulted its readings

anxiously at least every half-hour all day long, in a vain attempt to keep the temperature somewhere near what The Book commanded.

Around the bulb of the thermometer was a little strip of nickel-plated metal, bent as a guard to protect the glass. As it hung near the baby's head, a beam of light from the discreetly shaded window struck on this brightly polished metal. With considerable difficulty the baby's eyes focused themselves on the glittering spot of light. At first one of them turned in alarmingly and made him hideously cross-eyed but after an instant he got it under control and stared steadily at the new object.

It was most agreeable, bright enough to be vivid, yet not so bright as to dazzle. But as he had never before tried to focus his eyes on anything smaller than the window or the ceiling of the room, the effort soon tired him, and he fell suddenly into one of his long, trance-like sleeps. However, he had taken a great step forward. He was never after this quite the same.

The thermometer continued to hang there, and the beam of light to strike on it, and the baby's eyes to find it with more and more frequency. After much practice he made such enormous strides in the conquest of the world and of himself that he could locate it out of his head, and turn his eyes in the right direction to look for it. And he learned to focus his

eyes for infinite periods of time, sometimes as long as three minutes by the clock.

The human instinct for self-expression stirred. Here was something which was neither food nor warmth—and yet lovely. He felt an impulse to signify his approval of it. Curiously enough, this impulse prompted him to raise the corners of his mouth, to lift his eyebrows drolly and to wrinkle up his eyes. And when very fleetingly he performed this manœuvre, he had smiled.

He was so pleased with himself that he at once did it several times in succession. Between those exercises his face fell back suddenly into its usual ponderous fat solemnity, but while they lasted, the transformation into Falstaffian joviality was miraculous. His mother, who had no intimation of this new accomplishment, would not have recognized him.

From that time on, if awake when he was laid back in his bed after a meal, his small new scrap of memory rose up through the rawness of mere sensation, his eyes sought out the lovely thing which dwelt with him, and one of his inimitably jocund smiles saluted it. This never happened until his mother had withdrawn and he had been lying for several moments in the hushed quiet of his own domain. After the assault upon his nerves made by the prodigious and bustling wonders of his room, of his bath, of the excitements of being handled, dressed, and undressed, it took him

some time to recover his mental equilibrium and to attune his tiny soul to the still small radiance of his lodestar.

. . . . .

She had lifted him out of his bath, and he now lay on her lap, wriggling and twisting with satisfaction in the warm room, all his chubby rotundities bare to her view. She looked down on him in astonishment. Where had he come from, this amorphous scrap of human flesh? What place had he in the existence she and her beloved had planned? They had planned a life together, she and that other human soul who filled her heart so that she had room for nothing else. They had planned a life built around their sacred need for each other. It was to be orderly, coherent, full of intellectual pursuits, of worthy ambitions, of achieved refinements, full, above all, of their love. . . .

And, because she and her lover were man and woman, there had come to them from nowhere, this stranger in their lives, this Third One who for always and always would stand between them, break the divine isolation of their union. Always and always he would be there, never again could they know the old freedom, the old . . .

The baby, rejoicing in the freedom of his nakedness, kicked out lustily, waving his hands and feet. His cushion-like foot struck sharply against his mother's hand. She looked down at him again, looked

at him as though she had been wakened from a dream. Her brooding eyes flamed. She caught him to her in a passion, a fury. She buried her face in his soft, fragrant flesh; she kissed him, long and sensuous kisses like a lover's—she kissed his cheeks, his eyes, his knees, his feet . . .

Flesh of her flesh, bone of her bone—how dear he was,—how terribly, piercingly dear!

One of the new difficulties which had arrived with the baby was the difficulty about help. Before that event, the baby's mother had been one who thanked Providence that she was not as other women who have trouble with their cooks. Ever since the return from the honey-moon, her kitchen had been occupied by a well-paid Swede who masterfully prepared all the meals and kept the pretty, small house shining from cellar to garret. She had been seconded by an unconsidered charwoman, a drabbled, lean-armed drudge, who came two days a week to wash and to do heavy cleaning.

The young mistress of the house took considerable credit to herself for this smooth running machinery. She said with an air of mature experience that there was no difficulty in keeping good help if you treated them well; and she lavished upon the competent Swede so many tokens of gratitude for her competence that she was convinced herself that the Swede had a warm

personal attachment to her. Although she probably would not have recognized the laundress if she had met her on the street, she took conscientious pains to be kind to her also, sending down by the cook what old clothes were no longer of use, and at Christmas time presenting her, through the same medium, with a five-dollar bill.

But when the baby came, trailing with him the customary clouds of extra washing, extra food, fussy nurses, irregular hours, and soiled linen, the competent Swede promptly took herself off, knowing well that there are plenty of places without babies, where one's competence meets with due rewards. Since then a succession of incompetents had sagged in and out of the kitchen, all complaining, not unreasonably, of the confusion and extra work a baby makes. The baby's mother was too busy with him really to grapple with the problem and for the time being the household ran on spasmodically, on its own impetus, aided by an occasional push from the lean arms of the charwoman, who continued with unconsidered fidelity to arrive at the basement door, and if she was needed, to wipe her water-sodden hands on her dingy apron and ascend the basement stairs to the upper region hitherto reserved for more presentable help. It chanced to be while she was in the room, making up a bed, that the baby's mother became involved in a painful perplexity which threatened to become alarming. Some-



thing was the matter with the baby, and she did not know what it was! He was sleepy, obviously, for he frequently yawned, that inimitable, startlingly human yawn of the tiny baby, and he was evidently trying to rub his eyes with his small fist, although for the most part the fumbling little hands went anywhere but in his eyes. And yet he did not go to sleep. Instead, he fretted in a faint, dull voice which struck terror to his mother's heart. A sentence from *The Book* rang ominously in her ears, "It is not the loud vigorous cry of anger or hunger which need alarm the mother, but the low moan of weakness." She felt of him anxiously to see if he had a fever, she felt of him to see if his legs were drawn up, which the *Book* said was a sign of colic. She swallowed hard, putting out of her mind such horrible words as infantile paralysis, and spinal meningitis, as she hung over the little bed with clasped hands and anxious face.

The scrubwoman, observing this pantomime, said something; but as she was putting a clean pillow-case on a pillow, which she held tightly between her teeth, her remark was quite unintelligible. The baby's mother turned glazed eyes towards her and said impatiently, "Did you speak?" She had forgotten the other woman was in the room. Frequently indeed, she did not see the dingy figure at all, as the scrubwoman moved about at her tasks.



The older woman came over to the little bed and looked down at the fretful, moaning baby, "Why don't you turn him over, so he lays on the other side?" she said.

Willing, in her distress, to try even the most inadequate suggestion, the baby's mother lifted the inert little form and shifted its position. The fretful wails stopped, the baby's face calmed into utter peace, every weary muscle relaxed, he drew a long breath of relief and fell instantly into a profound sleep.

The scrubwoman went back to her work. She said casually, "They do get awful sick of layin' on one side all the time, and when they're as little as that, they can't turn themselves, no more'n a batch of dough can."

The baby's mother sat down on a chair and considered with a new respect the drab shadow to which she had never before given a moment's conscious attention. After a time she asked wonderingly, "How did you know what was the matter with him? Have you had a Baby, too?"

The scrubwoman gathered up a handful of soiled towels. "Seven," she said, "three dead and four living." She crossed the room with the ungraceful, heavy gait of women who have worked far beyond their strength.

The younger woman heard a roaring in her ears. Those six words echoed and re-echoed in the silence

about her. What unimaginable heights—what unimaginable depths they signified! She looked with awe at the woman who quite simply had laid such a priceless burnt-offering upon the altar of life . . . and then she turned her eyes to herself.

For a year, for more than a year, there had labored under her roof, a sister, an older sister—and she had never seen her until this hour.

When the scrubwoman went away that evening, her young employer did not give her a bundle of old clothing. She did not even give her a five-dollar bill. She took the worn, sodden, knotty fingers in hers and gave them the handshake of a comrade.

One day, as she was washing out his little flannels, that modern devil, self-questioning introspection, swooped down on her with wide-spreading bat-wings of gloom. An appalling theory about herself flashed into her mind as a possibility, and was instantly installed as a hideous fact.

She had noted several times that she was so busy over the baby that she did not seem constantly to feel that overflowing rush of maternal fondness of which she had so often read. Could it be that she was not a natural mother? Yes, it must be that.

She was too modern, too highly cultured, all the old primal instincts were smothered under her great accumulation of knowledge (yes, she had this thought,

and did not smile), she grudged the time the care of the baby took from her study of art and literature, from social life and self-beautification and all civilized pursuits. She did not really love her baby!

She remembered that even in her youth the hardening process had begun. She had had no sympathy with mothers, with babies. In her heart—as a girl—she had never cared for babies. And now she did not really love her own.

She crossed the room to hang up the little garments and glanced automatically under the canopy of the baby's crib. His face was relaxed in a supreme abandon to unconsciousness. How soundly he did sleep . . . it was almost unearthly. It seemed to her that she had never before really observed how profound is a baby's slumber . . . but did they, as a matter of fact, always sleep with so utter a . . . was that the reflection from the white counterpane, or did he look very white, like a little frozen flower . . . *as he might look if he were* . . .

A splintering horror crashed down through all her body. Her mouth went dry as ashes. It had never before occurred to her, no, not even once, that her baby might . . . she shuddered away from the word. Other women's babies might, but not hers . . . !

From across the room she stared fiercely at the little countenance, relaxed in that divine and terrible peace. No human face ever looked like that unless . . .

But if it were so, what would she have to live for . . . having known what it was to have him, what would be left for her if her baby were taken away? Nothing! nothing! nothing! She flung herself against a locked door.

But he should not . . . no, no, he should not. She would not let him go! She would clasp him so tightly that no power, not even the great Enemy, could reach him through the circle of her arms. And even as she defied the Enemy's grin figure, she knew him to be invincible, and her heart sickened . . .

The baby, dreaming that he was at his mother's breast, flung out one arm with a sturdy, vigorous gesture and began to suck noiselessly, drawing in imaginary milk.

Across the room a woman with a stricken face gasped and dropped into a chair. The reaction was so violent that for an instant she suffered an acute physical nausea. Then, as she felt her heart begin to beat again, there burst upon her, from some unexpected reservoir of sanity in her nature, a great sweeping flood of laughter.

She laughed as she never had laughed before in all her life, for it was the first time that she had ever known the exhilaration of laughing at herself! With all her might and main she was laughing at herself, and the tonic waters of that flood penetrated to many an arid, pretentious spot in her heart, and wrenched

her loose from many a constricting mooring of owl-like self-consciousness . . .

She had known the tragic terror which purges the heart and the bright cleansing laughter which heals it. All this in an interval of washing baby flannels!

The day of the great event arrived, all unknown to the baby and his mother. It happened to be also the day on which the baby attained the great age of two months, but nothing marked it from other days save, toward night, an unusual struggle on his mother's part to get him to go to sleep. The fact was that he was now getting old enough to stay awake for an appreciable time, but his mother had already begun the usual maternal habit of thinking of him as a stationary product, several degrees younger than he actually was. Moreover, as it happened, he chanced to feel like lying awake at a most inconvenient time: the exact hour in the late afternoon when she hoped to have him safely asleep, while she prepared supper against the homecoming of his tired and long-suffering father. How she longed to have the time to prepare and serve a really savory and unhurried meal again, such as they had not enjoyed since the entrance into the house of the new guest! So she exhausted herself in an effort to induce the baby to go to sleep when he did not feel sleepy.

For all her modern scientific theories, she had, for

putting him to sleep, hit upon several devices of honorable and ancient descent. Not for the world would she have laid him in a brain-addling, old-fashioned cradle and rocked him. But his crib stood on a slightly uneven place in the floor, and she had discovered that, by shaking one corner of it, a joggling motion was produced which was very pleasing to the baby's somewhat exacting taste. Joggling a crib is quite a different thing from rocking a cradle!

On this occasion, however, she joggled the crib till her back ached, without producing the fervently watched-for slow lowering of the "fringed curtains of his eyes." No indeed! He stared about him with the bright, vacuous gaze characteristic of his age, vastly enjoying the motion of his crib. His mother looked at the clock in a fever of impatience. She would even now have scarcely time to prepare that toothsome salad she had planned. And she had determined to have something really appetizing for supper that night.

In these days she had come quite humbly to expect little from life for herself, but she still rebelled because she could no longer minister to the small tastes and fancies of the baby's father. He was fond of that salad! If she could only snatch the time to make it for him! That one small achievement she had set her heart upon. It was little enough to ask of fate. But the baby would not go to sleep!

He seemed to be perfectly quiet and well, however.

Why not leave him, rush to the kitchen, and . . . but by this time the baby had quickly acquired a taste for the rhythmical motion of his bed. Before his mother had reached the bottom of the stairs he had worked himself into such a shrill passion of resentment at the cessation of the agreeable sensation that she rushed back, certain that some accident had befallen him. He lay, kicking, waving his arms about, and screaming with an energy terrifying to witness.

His mother set him up in bed and patted him on the back. The baby, much interested in this athletic exercise, stopped crying and contemplated vacancy. His mother laid him down with a haste in which there was some exasperation. A piercing shriek resulted. She leaned over him, joggling the crib again and saying in a soothing tone, "There, there, there." The baby stopped crying, and gave himself up to luxurious enjoyment.

His mother looked at the inexorably advancing hands of the clock. She knew that he was being naughty for the first time in his life, and she remembered perfectly well that The Book recommended that any infant acting in this manner should be sternly left to cry it out. After a half-hour of futile dealing with her son, she went so far in obeying the precept of The Book as to leave him alone in the room and shut the door.

But she hovered in the hall outside, one agitated ear



laid to the crack of the door, and becoming genuinely frightened at the agonizing quality of his outcries, hastily re-entered the nursery, and, hurrying to the bed, picked up the sobbing, quivering, self-pitying little mass of egotism and laid his tear-wet cheek against her own.

If any benighted member of the older generation had been there to impress and instruct by the calm rigor of her application of correct principles, she might have been stiffened to a more thoroughgoing resistance; but the house was entirely empty. There was no audience to stimulate her in this battle of wills, and hers suddenly failed her. She had never been in the least noted for a self-sacrificing character, but her well-developed egotism was as nothing before the splendidly youthful zest of the baby for getting what he wanted.

She sank down on the bed, laying his little, musky-smelling bald head on the pillow close to hers, and clasping him to her. The baby's maniacal paroxysm of crying had been a healthfully invigorating bit of exercise for him, and now, feeling a delicious fatigue, he gave a long sigh, relaxed comfortably, flung one tiny arm upon his mother's neck and went to sleep.

His mother felt the most foolish pleasure at this sign of his fondness for being near her, although she made an effort at arid common sense and said to herself, "Of course it's simply the warmth of my body. He would do the same thing if I should get him a

hot-water bottle!" But she did not believe this in the least.

She lay quite still, not daring to stir for fear of waking him. Her muscles relaxed involuntarily at the contact with his inert little body, warm and heavy on her arm. For the moment she had forgotten about her plans for supper. She was really very tired after her day of activity. How soft his round little cheek felt against hers. . . .

At a cry from the baby she woke. The room was in twilight. How long could she have slept? It was time for the baby's next meal, and before that would be over his father would be back from the office . . . and no supper prepared! Probably the kitchen fire was out, too. She must at least start that . . .

But the baby screamed and screamed. He was wet and cold and hungry. As usual, before anything else, his wants must be satisfied. How tired she was! Her short sleep had betrayed her into a weak relaxation without really refreshing her. . . .

As she sat, a few moments later, holding the heavy baby to her breast, she drooped forward wearily in her chair, her back aching, her head throbbing, her spirit utterly cowed in that black depression known to nursing mothers, partly physical, the result of feeding two lives from one source, and partly spiritual.

She was, she felt it drearily, an entire failure in life. She was a failure as a housekeeper . . . she looked

about the room, dimly lighted by a lamp with a smoky chimney; as an individual, she knew her hair to be untidy; as a wife . . . she remembered with an instant's fury of disappointment the supper she had planned; as a mother . . . she looked down at the baby, who, minute atom of humanity as he was, had pitted his strength against hers, and won. Her eyelids began to sting. . . .

The baby was enjoying his meal with even more than his usual gusto. In a moment's pause he looked up steadily into his mother's face, which by this time was quite familiar to him. It was even agreeable, too, as the inevitable concomitant of food and warmth and care; though of course it was not beautiful like the thermometer.

That is, it was not usually beautiful. But to-day he observed something new about it. It was richly ornamented with glistening jewels, resplendent in the light of the lamp. They shone, rainbow-like; they gave out a lovely iridescence. The baby observed them with delight, and the muscles of his face, practised and adept by this time in his great accomplishment, responded.

Suddenly the fat round face underwent the miraculous transformation. The heavily hanging cheeks drew upward in lines of inimitable jollity, the eyes brightened into shining wells of mirth, the eyebrows arched, the little nose crinkled drolly, the rose-red mouth expanded into a wide, silent laugh. Nothing in

all nature, except a burst of sunshine through clouds, could be compared to the radiance of the baby's face, as he lay laughing at his mother's tears.

The door opened quietly and a youngish man with tired eyes stepped in. Before him was an untidy room, a windowbox of drooping, unwatered plants, a lamp with a smoky chimney, and a picture hanging very much askew.

He saw none of these things. He saw only a woman holding a baby in her arms, the light of the lamp glowing like a halo through her loosened hair; and as he looked his eyes were no longer tired. For though there were tears on the woman's cheeks, her face shone with startled rapture. She looked up and cried in a voice vibrant with incredulous joy, "Oh, oh . . . the baby has just smiled at me! He has *smiled!*"



## AN ACADEMIC QUESTION

### I

THE attitude of his fiancée—and almost bride—about the change in his fortunes was a never-failing source of steady comfort and delight to Nathaniel Alden, a little dizzy from the complete overturning of all his plans. He told his aunt proudly :

“ Laura says she’s actually glad I am to be a poor man, because the training she has had from being brought up as the eldest daughter in the family of a poor minister will be of some use to me. She was afraid before that her accomplishments in the line of frugality and thrift would be faults rather than virtues in our life abroad—the dear ! ”

Later on, only a few days before the wedding, when the question of his profession was being settled, the young scholar again thanked Heaven for having given him such a pearl among women. One of his dead father’s associates offered him a lucrative position, perhaps as conscience-money for a share in the conspiracy which had swept away the small Alden fortune ; but Laura would not hear of his accepting it, because his finicky sense of honor revolted at some aspects of the trade. She made him accept, instead, the

offer of an assistant professorship in the French department of a large Western State university.

Her reasoning sounded as convincing and sensible to her lover as it was disinterested and generous.

“My dear Nat!” she had exclaimed, in affectionate impatience over his hesitancy. “Why are you marrying a poor girl, if you don’t get any benefit from it? I don’t want money. I shouldn’t know what to do with it if I had it. I only want you; and I want you happy and contented in your work, not rebelling and bitter all the time at shady things your business makes you do. If you went into business, you’d make five thousand dollars right away, and so on up to ten thousand, that hateful fat man told you. But where should we live? In that ugly, unhealthy, unspeakable city, where there isn’t a soul who cares about anything but money; and you’d be spending all your time and strength getting ahead of people in ways that are really dishonest, and that would make you hate yourself. What good should we get from all that salary?”

“You see, I’m not sacrificing myself at all—I’m just clutching at what I want; for look at the other side. You have fifteen hundred a year right away, and that’s all my father and mother have ever had to bring up all our big family on, and for all you’ve been at home in Denham so little, you must know we’ve always lived comfortably, and never really lacked anything essential. And we should live in a lovely



little college town that's almost like one of our New England villages, so everybody says, even if the country is quite flat; where the social tone of the people is all decided by the university atmosphere, and is correspondingly high and free from snobbishness. And then think! It's what you always wanted to do, to bring the admirable features of French life and thought home to Americans; and here's your chance—and nobody can do it so well as you, who know France so thoroughly. Why, everything points to my being Mrs. Professor Alden!"

The young man was enraptured by the long homily. In his foreign-bred ignorance of the details of American life, he felt that he could advance no argument against it.

"All the same, you're one in a thousand," he said fondly, "to insist on my taking an academic position when you might have an automobile."

She closed the discussion with a gesture of mock scorn.

"An argument beneath contempt, Professor Alden!"

## II

The letter of acceptance was written and sent on the day before the wedding, and one of the events of their modestly inexpensive wedding-journey was a cordial

answer from the head of the French department, welcoming his "distinguished new colleague" and expressing great satisfaction at the news that he was to bring a bride to Clarendon.

"We rather pride ourselves on our agreeable social life in Clarendon," he wrote; "and the arrival of a bride is always a festival occasion with the good ladies of the faculty circles—although, indeed, there is no society outside the faculty in our picturesque little town."

At this Laura looked pleased, but a little apprehensive.

"I'm afraid I haven't clothes enough," she said, and then added: "But we're going to have nearly two whole months before the university opens; and after we get settled I can get time to make some more. I don't suppose there's any real social life until the winter's work begins."

Upon their arrival they found her conjecture correct to a greater degree than they had imagined. The little town lay under the blazing sun of the Middle West—a deserted spot in all the rankly green farm-country about. The last weeks of the summer school were at hand, and, although classes were being regularly continued, the instructors in charge were young bachelors, or men whose families were away at some summer resort.

They greeted the newcomers kindly enough, but

were evidently surprised to see them at that time of year. It was with uplifted eyebrows of polite surprise that they met the Aldens' statement that they had arrived to settle down and live in Clarendon during the rest of the summer. They themselves were in a fever of impatience to be away; and the day after the summer session closed the great assembly of handsome, big buildings on the campus was empty, save for janitors.

"It's all the better," declared Alden to his wife. "We have the whole town to ourselves, and I can get used to living steadily in America before they come back. I want to forget I've ever been abroad—except that I mean to take my classes there in spirit!"

When they began house-hunting, they were horrified at the rents of the houses in the part of the town pointed out to them as the "faculty village." Laura's New England frugality, and Nathaniel's habit of estimating sums in francs, reduced them to despair at the end of three days.

"I won't *do* it!" Laura declared, as they sat in their boarding-house bedroom comparing plans and rents. "I won't pay a third of our entire income for rent, and then have to heat the house besides. It's preposterous! What do other people do?"

The next day, without speaking to the real-estate agent to whom they had been recommended by the registrar of the university, they walked briskly into

another region of the town, and found, to their great relief, exactly what they wanted. Laura was delighted with the pretty little cottage, the big tree over it, and the pleasant view down to the sluggish river and across to the far-distant horizon of the plains. The rent, although still beyond that of their New England home village, seemed reasonable enough after the terrifying demands first made on them.

The agent, to whom they triumphantly announced their discovery, made no comment on their action.

The young man's latent sense of domesticity sprang into the happiest and most vivid life during the weeks that followed. Accustomed to alternating the impersonal discomfort of foreign *pensions* with rare visits to his aunt's bare old house and rigidly fixed life in Denham, the business of settling and arranging this new little nest of cheer and warm personal delight was intoxicating to him.

They made one or two trips to the neighboring big city, to buy their pretty and inexpensive furnishings, from a list which had been the subject of infinite pleasant discussions as they sat on their own front porch in the warm summer evenings. Alden could not recover from his surprise at his wife's easy, competent disposal of the housework. She declared that their little house and simple life were "just nothing at all compared to looking after all the children in our family"; and, indeed, her vigorous vitality throve

under the homely and homelike routine of their lives.

As he studied and prepared himself for the work he so eagerly awaited, she cooked and sewed, and trained the vines about the piazza, and was always at leisure when he emerged from the little room which they had dedicated to his professorship. They laughed at themselves, sometimes, for being so contentedly and absurdly "1850 domestic," as Laura said; but it was a happy season.

### III

The president of the university was one of the first of the fall arrivals, most of the faculty retarding their return to the latest possible day. The new assistant in French paid his respects promptly to the head of the institution, and came home quite pleased with the cordial, although somewhat vague and absent, greeting he had received.

"A man of great deal of power—you can see that at once," he said.

He loyally adhered to this favorable judgment in the face of the president's failure to recognize the newcomer the next time they passed in the street. His secretary, who was with him, pointed out Mr. Alden, and the president apologized genially for his oversight.

“There are so many of you young fellows, and you come and go so! See here, don’t wait for me to speak. Speak first, and then I’ll be sure!”

Evidently the slight hung remorsefully in his mind; for a few days later his carriage deposited him at the gate of the Aldens’ yard, and he paid a half-hour’s call on Mrs. Alden, taking his departure with an evident sense of relief at a duty done.

Laura told every detail of the call to her husband when he came home to supper.

“He was very pleasant, indeed, although I kept feeling that he’d be pleasant that same way to anything and anybody, from his cook to his wife. He seemed surprised to find us over here, and said he couldn’t ever remember coming into this part of town before; but he thought the house was very cozy. As he went away he kept looking at our next door neighbor—the man with the black beard, you know—and finally said, to himself: ‘Oh, yes, I know,’ as if he remembered who it was. So he *does* know some people over here.”

The young husband found, on his part, that the surprise as to where they were living was universal. The head of his department, from his semipaternal position, spoke to him frankly about it, in a conversation which left a distinctly unpleasant memory in the assistant’s mind. The head approached him, in his genial manner, shortly after he returned.

"I hear, my dear Alden, that you and your pretty little bride were egregiously deceived this summer by an unscrupulous real-estate agent. I should have thought the registrar would have referred you to somebody reliable. Of course, you couldn't know it; but you've put yourself off in a part of town where nobody lives at all."

"You're mistaken, I assure you," said Nathaniel, with a naïveté for which he blushed a moment later. "There are houses all about us—indeed, closer than we should like."

"I mean nobody of the faculty—except a few tutors in the agricultural department. Nobody in our department would think of living there, for instance. I don't blame you, of course; you couldn't possibly know the conditions of a strange town. It's too bad you came so far ahead of the season, when none of us were here to help you; but you can probably sublet that place and move up into the faculty village. There's a good house not far from where we are."

At this Nathaniel explained, with an honest pride in his frankness, that he could not think of paying more rent than at present.

"You, Professor Martin, know what my salary is; you can see for yourself that I can afford only a small rent. Besides, the house where we live is perfectly comfortable, and all we need."



Professor Martin looked at him in a dismayed silence, and then said:

“My dear fellow, of course your *salary*—but I understood you had some fortune of your own—you’ve lived abroad so much—and never felt the need of earning money before. I took for granted—”

Nathaniel laughed, relieved that he could correct the misapprehension so easily.

“I never had much money—just enough to live inexpensively on abroad and continue my studies; but that was all swept away in the Eldenberry failure. I have nothing but my salary.”

The other man spoke in an altered voice, as he answered with a dry briskness, leaving the room:

“Well, I hope that you’ll see your way clear to leaving there, in any circumstances. I don’t like to have my department confused with the agriculturalists!” At the door he paused for a final shaft. “You may be interested to know that the president himself mentioned to me that his tailor is your next-door neighbor.”

Alden could not bring himself to speak of this conversation to his wife—a concealment for which he felt less guilty when suddenly, in a burst of nerves one day, she confessed to a much greater one. It seemed that several of the elder faculty wives, in calling on her, had exhorted her in much the same strain.

“I don’t care a thing about it’s not being a nice part

of town, Nat," she had said, half sobbing; "but they said it would interfere in your work and hurt your standing to live as we do, no maid and all. I'm a hindrance to you—I'm getting in your way. But what else can I do?"

In the comforting, intimate talk which followed he unburdened his mind of the remarks of his chief; and the two young creatures strengthened and consoled themselves by a mutual righteous indignation. Upheld by each other's sympathy, they felt a burden lifted and themselves stronger for the conflict.

But the very next day, as Alden sat in his study deep in his books and hearing absently the murmur of conversation between his wife and a visitor, he was recalled sharply by catching a note of battle in Mrs. Alden's voice. He listened.

"Well, you may call it living like a working man, if you like, but if we only get working men's wages what can you expect? It was good enough for my father, and I'm sure your father always stood in awe enough of mine!"

Nathaniel laid down his book in astonishment. Laura was talking to no stranger, evidently. A smooth, strident voice, with meaningless modulations, answered:

"My dear little Laura, you mistake me. I am only doing my duty by you, now that I find we are old friends. There isn't anybody else to tell you what

people are saying about you, and somebody ought to. Believe me, you can't fly in the face of an old-established society like ours!"

Laura laughed excitedly at this.

"Old-established!" she said. "Why, my own uncle, when he came out West, drove his boomer's wagon right over the hill where the university stands now, and there wasn't anything then!"

"The members that make up the society came from old-established places, and have traveled a great deal, and wish to uphold the standards of civilized society here. You'd find your welcome here just what you said Professor Martin foretold, if you'd conform to the customs of the place. I'd be very glad to help you select your furnishings, for instance. You know the town has a very pretty taste in old mahogany and blue china—but there, we won't talk any more about it now! You think over what I've said, and you'll see I'm right. Why, suppose people should entertain for you, how could you reciprocate? The people in the French department are quite puzzled to know what to do to make you feel the least bit comfortable. We're like an army-post, you know—a sort of outpost of civilization."

She now turned the conversation resolutely in another line.

"I see you have some of those charming Dutch tiles," she said with a gracious accent. "Isn't it the

most fascinating occupation picking up odd things in out-of-the-way nooks and corners abroad?"

"I don't know," said Laura bluntly. "I've never been abroad."

"Oh!" said her visitor disjunctively, and there was a silence. "Well, you don't have to go to Europe for odd pieces of furniture," she went on after a moment, with an air of making an allowance. "Mrs. Martin, the wife of the head of our department, has a great many charming pieces of old mahogany that she picked up at auction-sales in the South. Usually people coming from New England have old family pieces, too."

Laura answered with a short laugh.

"You know what Denham is like, and how nice the old furniture is apt to be there. No, I haven't anything that's older than last summer. We bought everything in one of the big department stores in Hurrytown."

There was another silence, broken by the visitor's voice exclaiming, with evident relief:

"Oh, there's my car, now, for me. How quickly the time has gone! Good-by, Laura, dear—you don't mind my calling you that? And do believe that I stand ready to help you at any time. Of course, you can't know about conditions here as I do, and I'm sure you want to help your husband in his work. We all hang together, you know, like one big family, and take an interest in one another's lives."

As the front door banged, Alden emerged from his study and found Laura with red eyes.

"It's not because my feelings are hurt," she said, resentment in her voice. "I just got so angry that I couldn't keep the tears back. Not that I mind what *she* said—Sallie Parsons!"

She explained that the caller was the wife of another assistant in the French department, and that the fastidiously dressed, sophisticated Mrs. Monroe had turned out to be Sallie Parsons from Denham, whose father was the laughing-stock of the town for his illiterate speech. She had married and gone away years ago, when Laura was a little girl. Her husband had made money in some shady business connected with a big system of bucket-shops, and then had died, leaving his widow a handsome fortune. Laura had not heard of her marriage to a university professor shortly after, and her appearance, snugly ensconced on the highest ledge of Clarendon society, was a complete surprise.

It seemed that Mrs. Monroe had also been surprised to find the little girl she had left in Denham grown up and married, in the West; but she had immediately availed herself of the privilege of free speech, which a previous acquaintance gave her.

"No, you needn't ask me what she said, more than you heard," stormed Laura, "for I sha'n't repeat it. It was beneath contempt. Only she criticised every-

thing in our life, from my not keeping a maid to the way I do my hair and furnish the parlor. She said she'd heard a great deal about the queer way we were doing, but she hadn't dreamed of speaking about it until she found we were old friends. Then she thought it was really her duty to tell me that I was injuring my husband's career by my provincial ideas. Do you think I am injuring your career, Nat?"

Alden drew her to him with a tender murmur of sympathizing protest.

"It's I who am putting you in a position where you are wounded all the time," he said remorsefully. "I've been thinking half seriously that I'd better take that position with Wellman, after all. It's still open to me—a sort of standing offer, you know."

"Not much you don't!" declared his wife with a homely vigor of phrase, coming back to herself. "Not one step do you go, now that your work is succeeding so wonderfully! One of the college girls I met in the drug-store the other day told me that they never knew what it was to study a foreign language before. She said you were one of the most popular professors in the university!"

Alden's eye kindled at the mention of his work, and he said no more about changing his profession. Indeed, he found himself supremely happy in his classes. He labored and toiled at the task of teaching elementary French, with the creative joy of an artist,

which forbids work ever to seem drudgery. He was imbued with missionary spirit, and burned to carry clarity of thought, precision of mental effort, and appreciation of fine shades of meaning, to these fumbling, half-educated young people, as ardently as ever his Puritan ancestors longed to lead a new country to their ideals.

The smallest details of grammar and idiom were irradiated with the light of his large vision of their significance in the spirit of the language. His classes were electrified; they worked as they had hitherto worked only for science courses. His enthusiasm was a mounting fire which kindled the indifferent mass of his heterogeneous students into a flame of interest and appreciation which surprised themselves.

#### IV

He became more and more absorbed in his work, conscious, it is true, from time to time, of pin-pricks of annoyance, but genuinely astonished, some months later, to find that they had grown into a bulk of tragic importance. It was as if he had absently observed wisps of cloud passing over the sun, all too small to notice, but which had banked themselves solidly into a sullen and threatening cloud-wrack that startled him as he glanced up from his work.

In other words, his bride of only six months was



unhappy. She was ashamed of it, and denied it as earnestly as her transparent nature would allow; but the fact remained that he was not making her happy—or at least, that he was not preventing other people from making her unhappy.

He was aware, suddenly, of the cumulative importance of the details he had considered negligible one at a time. It was, of course, absurd to be unhappy over not having Oriental rugs in their home, even though it was explained to them that the sophistication and the traveled culture of the faculty circle were so great and had so effectually permeated and transformed the crude Western town that even the boarding-house keepers now had only Turkish and Persian floor-coverings.

It was certainly childish to repine at having only one evening dress, even if every tutor's wife had several. It was too small to consider—the fact that one of the faculty's wives had apologized to Laura for not calling because her chauffeur did not know the way to the Aldens' street. Sensible people, of course, could only laugh at the pretension of a society which could say that dinner without wine was an impossibility, when every one knew that their fathers and mothers served coffee and cream honestly with the main meal of the day.

It was a funny episode, with, of course, no sting in it, when somehow the wires crossed while Laura

was telephoning, and she overheard her prospective hostess lamenting the fact that the Aldens did not play bridge.

"Heavens! It makes them simply *impossible* to entertain. If they weren't in the same department with my husband, I wouldn't think of it!"

Although her lips quivered, Laura had told her husband:

"I haven't any money to pay for lessons in bridge, and I'm sure I should be bored to play it all day long if I knew how already."

These things, and countless others, were insignificant in themselves, but Alden felt a qualm of dismay at their assembled magnitude.

"Why, what's the matter with us?" he cried in astonishment. "How do all these other people manage it?"

And he had set himself to investigate the financial situation with as thorough a purpose as if the problem were one of phonetics. He returned from his voyage of discovery among the men of the faculty in still greater dismay at their plight, and with genuine thankfulness for his own safety.

"Why, it's something awful, Laura, dear," he exclaimed. "I haven't talked to a man among them—even those who have money besides their salary—who isn't worried sick over the question of expense. And as for those who haven't anything else, like us, it

would make your heart ache to hear them. They are fairly lying awake nights over it, and going further into debt year by year. Nearly all of them work at something else—editing, or translating, or writing textbooks, or doing hack literary work—anything that'll bring in the money. That's why they haven't more strength and time for their work."

Laura broke in hotly at this.

"Well, the *idea*! What is the matter with their wives? I wouldn't have you do that, just to get things we don't want—never!"

Her husband smiled at her fondly.

"Ah, but everybody can't marry *you*. You know they all prophesied that I'd break down if I kept up at the pace I began; but I'm the only man in the faculty who still looks fresh and fit, now the end of the year is beginning to come in sight. They are the ones who are all the time complaining so bitterly about the impossibility of living on a professor's salary. They say not one of them has any time for research work in his own line, and they all admit that they've dropped by the wayside, as far as advance in their specialty is concerned. I think we can manage to worry along as we are. We have the best of it a great deal!"

In spite of this brave front, he had been painfully and unwillingly impressed by the vitality of the force which so harried his colleagues, and a little daunted at

his own light-hearted and ignorant defiance of it. He felt that he was not assuming his rightful place among his associates. He had declined to join the Professors' Club because of the high initiation and membership fee; but he found that most of the informal councils of the various departments took place over an expensive cigar in one corner of the luxuriously furnished club-room. He felt himself oddly humiliated to be obliged often to wait for the return of a colleague from the club building because he could not go to look for him there.

It began to seem that he had made a mistake—that it was simply good business to put himself on such a footing with those associated with him that he could deal with them with the least waste of energy. But he revolted from the idea of taking money for that purpose from his scanty income.

“If I’m letting Laura do her own work, in spite of gossiping tongues, I think I won’t indulge myself,” he thought with an instant sting of self-reproach.

Another time, smarting under the careless patronage of one of the young tutors, he had wondered vaguely if he could not get some translating to do, the money from which would cover the fees. He had realized, with a start, that he was standing on the edge of the same downward slope of nervous strain and neglect of his real work on which he saw his comrades struggling.

## V

Laura kept to herself what annoyance the spring brought her, and between the two there grew up a wall of reserve which Alden deplored, but felt it impossible to remove. He knew that she was burning with a sense of being in a false position, and he feared—and was ashamed of himself for the fear—that any reference to the subject would bring out a flood of complaint.

In the end it was he who broke the silence, shocked out of his stoical endurance by an acute need for sympathy.

To Alden, coming fresh from the non-academic world, with eyes sharpened by enthusiasm, there had come an inspiration for a revision of the system of instruction in French. His belief in it had strengthened with his experience; and when he finally spoke of it to his chief, he could see that it made a strongly favorable impression. Professor Martin was fairly carried off his feet, and a committee was immediately formed to consider and arrange the matter.

To Alden's stupefaction, he was not put on the committee. He waited for several days, hoping that some mistake had been made, and then spoke of it. Professor Martin looked slightly, although not seriously, embarrassed.

"Why, you see, Alden," he said in a tone of com-

plete and sufficient explanation, "you see, the old-established custom of the university"—Alden smiled involuntarily at this, the institution having recently celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary—"is to have the meetings of committees alternately at the Professors' Club and at the homes of the different members. It is one of our ways to promote social good-feeling, you know, with a little collation after the conference, and our wives to come in for music or something later; an English custom, I believe, in the first place. Of course, with your not being a member of the club, and Mrs. Alden not keeping a maid, and all, we didn't feel like imposing ourselves on her. It wouldn't have been kind."

He spoke with a jauntiness which faded under the accusing and resentful flame in the young man's eye.

"Of course, Alden, you mustn't think for a moment we are not going to give you credit for your share in the work. The first idea was yours. We sha'n't forget that."

Alden surveyed him for a moment in silence, with a difficulty in restraining himself so evident that the other sidled apprehensively to the door in an open retreat.

The hurt and sore young scholar took refuge in his wife's sympathy, and was pierced with remorse for his avoidance of her troubles by the whole-hearted way in

which she comforted him and said no word of her own difficulties.

“It’s really not a personal hurt, Laura,” he assured her. “It’s because of what I hoped to do with that idea. I’ve been taking notes on it every day, and experimenting with my classes almost since the beginning of work; and all that will be lost to them. They won’t take time to find it out themselves—even to see what the real meaning of the change is. They’re all so busy and distracted with other things.”

He walked apart in a proud isolation after this—an isolation which was pleasantly broken by a letter from an old school friend of his in Paris. Raoul Henriot wrote ecstatically that he had been chosen the professor for the annual lecturing-tour in the United States, under the auspices of the French government.

“A joy untold,” he said, “to think I am to see you and your wife and live a little of your life with you! Present my respectful and ardent salutations to *madame*, and tell her I have arranged my trip so that I may go directly to you after my landing in New York.”

Alden’s heart beat fast at the thought of meeting his friend, of hearing from his old life, and of enjoying some intellectual companionship once more. He felt suddenly that he had been very lonely. Laura was as delighted as he, and they both consulted the calendar, reckoning up, with an eager interest, the



days which separated them from the traveler's arrival.

Posters announcing the lectures of M. Henriot were thick about the campus, when Alden overheard, one day, some discussions of the question who was to entertain the distinguished foreigner. The president's wife was ill, and Mrs. Professor Martin was in the South, haunting auction sales in the pursuit of old mahogany furniture. Alden felt a little innocent pride in his heart that Raoul Henriot was an old friend of his, and was to be his guest during the lecturer's stay at Clarendon.

"I crushed them for once, Laura," he said. "They hadn't a word to say!" And then, with a sudden heart-sick shame: "Oh, think of my feeling that way! I'm getting as bad as the rest of them."

## VI

The last week of the university session arrived. It was to be marked by various social events complimentary to the foreign guest. Laura had set her house in spotless order; had gone to the extravagance of hiring a young girl to help her, so that she could be more at liberty, and expectantly awaited the pleasant episode in a life which of late had held few but unpleasant ones.

She saw little of the faculty people in these days, but her husband came into more and more irritating

contact with them. On the day when Henriot was to arrive, Alden sat alone in his hot little office, quite dispirited and fagged. Before him lay, like the apple before Eve, a tempting letter from Wellman & Co., offering a position slightly different from the one he had refused, and with an even larger salary. The young man smiled cynically as he glanced at it.

"Old Wellman's doctor must be telling him his last day is near, to keep his conscience stirred up to that pitch!" he mused.

The thought and the sardonic impulse behind it were new to him, and he pulled himself up sharply, surprised at the bitter aspect of his worn spirit.

"Good Heaven! I am as petty a creature as the Lord ever made," he said to himself. "Here I am— young, strong, married to the woman I adore, and glorying in my life-work—rebellling at fate, forsooth, because I don't belong to a certain club, and because my wife is clever and strong enough to do her own work!"

He thought, with the glow that the picture never failed to give him, of the eager, upturned faces of his students. He had a vision of what he might accomplish later on, of the leaven of gay sanity and precise thought and intelligent cheer with which he might hope to combat the conditions that he found about him—the hopeless materialism, the groping

uncertainty of aim, the sad and imprisoning impulse for material advancement.

A generous fervor lighted his eye, and he looked kindly upon Professor Martin, who came in with an evident discomfiting burden. He resolved that he would not take these people so seriously. It was possible that, heralded before his arrival as a man of means, he had fallen among the wrong clique. Perhaps there was a side of this little world that he had not yet seen. In any case, for the sake of his work, whatever new tyranny of smallness was in store for him he would bear lightly.

The other spoke with a palpable resolution to get through with an uncomfortable business as soon as possible.

“I’m very sorry, indeed, Alden, to seem rude to you, but I’m really not acting for myself in the matter. It’s the sentiment of the whole faculty circle, and I’m voicing it only because of my official relations to you. We think—they think that perhaps you’ve made a little slip in good taste in inviting M. Henriot to go to your house. Of course, we understood that you didn’t mean to be presumptuous—and, indeed, there’s no *presumption*, so far as that goes!—but, of course, Henriot is the guest of the university, in a way, and we’d—they’d like him to have a good impression of the way we live, and all. There are so many establishments that are better calculated for entertaining so

distinguished a man. It would really be rather embarrassing to have his hostess be also his maid. Of course, you and Mrs. Alden would be asked to meet him as often as possible. You see how it is."

Professor Martin finished suddenly, in a burst of relief at finding his recalcitrant young assistant for once easy to manage; for Nathaniel Alden was smiling. He leaned back in his chair with a long breath, brought his hand down on the table with a gesture of sudden resolution, and smiled encouragingly at the older man.

"Yes, Professor Martin," he assented, in an enigmatic tone which continued through all he said. "I see perfectly how it is. I haven't really been able to see before, but now I do. Pardon me for my stupidity. Certainly, do as the faculty circle think most to their credit. You may, perhaps, be interested to know that it will not be hard to impress Raoul Henriot. In Paris he lives in a little apartment of five rooms on the Rue Jacob. His wife keeps no servant, but has a *femme de ménage* to come in for the heavy work. I've visited him often there, and could even tell you what Henriot's salary is—a little less than mine, I believe. And, by the way, Professor Martin, this is probably as convenient a time as any for giving you my resignation."

He took up the letter from Wellman & Co., and waved it toward the older man.

"I have just decided to accept an offer that came

to me this morning. I'm going into a different line of work in another country."

There was a long hush. The air was heavy with electricity. Professor Martin caught desperately at any tool to break the silence.

"Why—why—where are you going?" he asked lamely.

"I'm going to take my wife to a healthier climate, where the air is more tonic than here. I'm going to live in the United States of America," continued the young man evenly. He permitted himself a discreet smile at this. "It is sometimes known, I believe," he added, "as the 'land of the free!'"

## FORTUNE AND THE FIFTH CARD

WHAT struck the eye in the well-appointed dining-room where Miss Middlesex and her brother Ezra sat entertaining an acquaintance was merely a very pleasant and commonplace scene. First of all there was the large handsome woman, with clear blue eyes which in spite of the dignified amplitude of her figure and the threads of silver among her blonde braids, retained a noticeably childlike quality of directness and simplicity. Second there was her brother, a stout, bald person whose eyes were anything but childlike, and who was, perhaps, a shade too concentrated on the contents of his plate. Lastly there was the guest, a person negligible for our purposes, who looked as though he were an actor very much overdoing the rôle of the Typical American Business Man.

What was to be heard by the ear was the usual dinner-table talk, a desultory conversation, rambling from the condition of the subway to the problem of immigration. It was in fact as an offshoot of this last theme that our story develops. Altogether a very pleasant and commonplace scene.

But sensitive nerves, registering more than mere eyes and ears, would have felt on entering that room

that a struggle of some sort was in progress; and after a sentence or two would have noted in the conversational contest a similarity to our national game of cards, particularly in respect to the possibility of long continuance. In other words, Miss Middlesex and her brother were fighting out a Temperamental Difference of long standing, and there is no more ending to that contest than to a game of poker. Fortune favors now one, now the other player, but as long as perseverance lasts, the interminable game is never lost or won.

In case the fateful words "Temperamental Difference" do not have for you the deep and bodeful import which they should have in these psychological days, I will tell you, abruptly, with an inartistic bluntness, that Mr. Middlesex believed his sister to be a sentimental bluffer, while she knew herself to be an Imaginative Philanthropist. The point at issue was not, therefore, as it seemed, whether the subway was well run or not, or whether Italians fared well in New York, but whether Miss Middlesex's brother could prove her the four-flusher he was sure she was. Miss Middlesex, enlivened by the agreeable prospect of a long sojourn in Europe, was in excellent form, and had never more abounded in the facile turns and twists whereby she was ever wont to escape the sordid show-down to which it was her brother's life-long ambition to reduce her.

This difference of opinion and of aim, resulted in



even bolder playing than usual on the evening in question, because the guest made a witness to the combat and every process in the world except lovemaking and stealing, goes on at a livelier pace before an audience. Miss Middlesex had begun with an advantage. Mr. Martin the guest, obviously admired her looks, and was as obviously disposed to think them indicative of her character, a common masculine weakness of judgment which always aroused the seasoned Ezra to exasperation. He had his own opinion about the unconsciousness of ladies as to the child-likeness of their eyes. Moreover, stimulated by admiration, Miss Middlesex had launched into a profuse sublimity of phrase which at the stage when this story begins, had deeply suffused her brother's bald head with the crimson of impotent irritation. He had a firmly rooted distrust of all phrases, and the more sublime they were, the more he distrusted them.

Quite unaware that he was embarking on anything more serious than a friendly hand of whist, the guest now signified his intention of "sitting in" by the smilingly indulgent remark to his hostess, "Well perhaps—perhaps! But you can hardly expect hard-headed broker-folk like your brother and me, to get very much excited about their homesickness. We leave that to you. The Ginnys get all that's coming to them, I should say."

Mr. Middlesex ate his salad grindingly and said

nothing. Miss Middlesex soared aloft on shining wings of idealism, "If we had an atom of sympathetic divination, we could not pass an Italian in the street without mentally begging his pardon for our civilization. But we are so the product of that civilization that we cannot even understand what we do to their souls, their finely finished old souls, rich with the unconscious polish of centuries of contact with art-in-life. We cannot even conceive what our raw, graceless New York must be to one whose fathers and grandmothers have always lived where every window-casing, every molding, every ledge, every shelf, every street-corner, is an instance of art conquering life—do have a little more cheese, Mr. Martin—you took such a small portion."

"Thank you, I will," said Mr. Martin. "It's excellent."

Mr. Middlesex remarked ruminatively, "My sister had been taking a lecture course on the Italian Renaissance, this winter."

This comment passed quite over the head of the guest, absorbed in helping himself to cheese, but it struck quiveringly, full in the bull's-eye of Miss Middlesex's consciousness. She folded her lips together slightly, and said to Mr. Martin, "There, you see, even their cheese—this is imported Gorgonzola—there is a finish, a flavor, a *something* about it, that we can't reproduce. And that's what I mean. It goes into the

smallest details of life. They are like people without enough air to breathe. They live—oh yes, they live—or rather they don't live, they exist."

"That's more than they do at home, it seems," murmured Mr. Martin, folding his double chin into a quadruple one, as he looked down at his somewhat protuberant waistcoat and flicked a crumb from it.

"Of course, of *course*," admitted his sister, as though he had kindly pointed out one of the strongest points in her argument. "That's more than they are able to do at home, and that's the *only* reason they come away! Nothing but actual starvation could drive them from the Place where People Live, to the Limbo where they do nothing but Make a Living." Miss Middlesex had a gift for verbal capitalization. "The poorest, plainest of them feel it. It is not a matter of conscious intelligence, but of fineness of fiber. They are all strings on the Aeolian harp of their race."

Mr. Middlesex's color becoming alarming at this phrase, she shifted hastily to the concrete and went on, "Take a simple case I happen to know—the fruit vendor on the corner below us. I have had one or two talks with him—they are so grateful to any one who will speak their own language to them! He has told me his story. He has a wife and four children in one of the Italian hill-towns—Orvieto—you know that exquisite dream of medieval architecture overlooking that vast historic plain. And there, for the lack of

mere food—he said they were starving, actually starving—he left them, left the spot to which he was tied by a thousand impalpable bonds, and came—*here!* You know what the life of a poor Italian fruit-vendor in New York is likely to be! His is all of that, and worse. And to what end? If he were alone in the world, he might hope to return with enough to live on in Orvieto, but, having given hostages to Fortune, she rewards him with the bitterly ironic fate of laboring to bring those he loves to share the desolation of his exile! ‘In three years,’ he told me, ‘I make enough to bring them all here,’ and when he said ‘here’ he looked up and down that dreary, sordid, dirty, snow-encumbered New York street, and I tell you, I literally blushed for shame!”

Her voice was dropped to quiet, wistful sympathy. She observed that the salad was all eaten and gave a sign to the servant standing back of her, who now began preparations for the next course.

Mr. Martin was impressed. “I hadn’t realized that it might be pretty tough on them,” he admitted, “But I see now. Lord! yes, it surely would seem more than I could *bear*, if I thought I had to spend the rest of my life in Orvieto!”

Mr. Middlesex drew a long breath and smiled at his sister, at this testimony to the eloquence with which she had made her point clear to the American. He said cheerfully, “Oh, don’t take my sister too seriously,

Martin. She views life through a literary eye and she gets the fun out of her unfortunates that most ladies do out of the unhappy endings to the novels they read. That Dago has been right there for a long time, and I don't notice that she has done anything to impair the thrill of emotion she gets when she thinks how homesick he is."

At this rather gross plunge to the limit, Mr. Martin looked quite startled and uncomfortable, hearing for the first time the click of the chips, and having for an instant a dim divination that something was at stake more than the winning or losing of the easy-going three-handed rubber which he had thought was the affair of the evening. He had the rather panic-struck impulse for flight which comes over the amateur who unexpectedly finds himself playing with professionals.

Miss Middlesex interpreted his expression as one of disillusion, a reflection on her game. Something of her brother's heat flamed in her spirited blue eyes. She rose to the situation resolutely, and pushing all her stack into the table center, she said triumphantly, although a little breathless at her daring, "I hadn't meant to tell you, Ezra—it's one of the things one doesn't like to—but perhaps now." She hesitated, and turned to the guest, "You see, Mr. Martin," she said, "My brother considers me such an impractical and visionary person, that I'm always afraid he'll make fun of my little schemes, and I'm apt to keep them

from him. I haven't ventured to tell him my plan in this matter. I sail for Italy, you know, to-morrow morning, and I have made arrangements to take this poor Italian friend of mine with me. I had been intending to use a small legacy—twelve hundred dollars—from an old aunt, for a stained glass window for St. Agatha's; but I feel sure it will give more happiness in this way, by saving at least one family from exile. My Italian friend sails to rejoin his family, on the same steamer with me to-morrow."

It was magnificent, the calm, starry-eyed self-restraint with which she gently laid her cards on the table. Her brother looked at them, goggle-eyed, "Good God!" he said, with what import nobody could divine from his tone.

"I suppose it *must* seem rather foolish to you hard-headed broker-folk," said Miss Middlesex depreciatingly, her eyes very clear and childlike.

"It seems too good to be true," said her brother suspiciously. He added, "See here, Martin, don't you want to go down with me to-morrow to the dock and see Nellie off? It's not half bad that last half-hour—quite a spectacle—pretty girls, flowers, good-bys, excitement—maybe a dock-hand killed. And we can wish Nellie's Orvieto protégé a happy return to his old home."

Miss Middlesex knew now the import of his profane exclamation. She held up her fifth card squarely



before his suspicious eyes, "*Do* come, Mr. Martin," she urged him. "I shall so love to have you see my Italian friend." She was trying desperately to remember the name painted in blue on the yellow fruit-stand, but not succeeding, she said, as they rose, "Now, if you'll adjourn to the library, I'll give you your coffee there."

As she passed her brother, he gave her a look in which for once there was something of admiration.

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From the upper deck of the steamer, Miss Middlesex waved farewell to a group of friends and admirers, of whom she had legion. She looked very well indeed in her dark-blue ship-dress, her eyes very bright, her cheeks flushed with excitement and success. She was smiling, and magnificent with energy. If her brother Ezra had ever been able to put into a business deal a tenth part of the concentrated determination which she had expended that morning, he would have been a much wealthier man than he was. Her maid stood on one side of her, on the other side was a short, dark, broadly-built, youngish, shabbily dressed man, and before her stood two elderly New York business men, saying good-by.

Miss Middlesex was slightly breathless and a little dizzy; but it was the dizziness which comes with complete success. She had never enjoyed herself more than at that moment. She looked at her brother with



affectionate pity. She looked at the short, dark, shabby man and tried to imagine what he must be thinking of her. This speculation brought a final, deep glow to her eyes. She sank happily into a steamer-chair and waved him away, "You'd better go and make sure of your berth, Giuseppe," she said. "And you can come up here every morning for a talk with me, if you like."

He walked away, his eyes glazed with bewilderment; she was still thrilling with the idea of what he must be thinking of her.

She was roused from this by the voice of her brother who turned toward her from a low-toned talk with her maid. "Nellie, I've just been telling Nora to drop me a card once in a while about your various adventures." His tone was friendly; he was smiling. Miss Middlesex looked at him, moved to lively apprehension. He went on, "Nora is just racially jealous enough to take a low, materialistic view of your protégé." Miss Middlesex knew his name by this time, and she supplied it with an air of long acquaintanceship, "Giuseppe Carnola."

Her brother waved it away, "Oh I can't remember one Dago name from another. In her quaint vernacular, Nora has been telling me that she thinks 'the Ginny is stringing Miss Nellie' and hasn't a wife and children any more than she has."

Miss Middlesex gave him one stricken look of aston-

ished horror. The idea was evidently as devastating to her as it was unexpected. Her brother reflected that some of the simplicity and childlikeness of her eyes must be genuine, after all. But she rallied at once, and put her back against the wall, "I'll have Nora write you a letter, the day after we get to Orvieto," she said gallantly, and kissed him good-by on both cheeks. As usual the game had ended in a draw, with the decision in the future. She had quite forgotten her thrill over what her beneficiary could be thinking of her.

As a matter of fact, Giuseppe was not thinking of her at all, nor indeed, of anything. The whole transaction had been so deeply dyed with rank impossibility that he was firmly convinced that it was still last night, and that he was sound asleep in his bed. The car, stopping in the slushy street by his stand, the descent upon him of the large lady wrapped in furs, the voluble flow of Italian so incorrect that he caught but the faintest glimmer of her purpose, the pieces of gold she had put into his hand, the swift transit to the steamer—what was all that but the material of the maddest dream! He put one foot before the other and did not feel the deck under them.

Later in the day he came back to a sense of reality with a sharp pang, like a blow on his heart, with the thought of his fruit-stand, left ownerless on the street. He groaned aloud at the thought of the wasted money.

It was true he had many hundred times the value of it in his belt, in good American gold, but his frugal Latin soul was revolted at the waste. He woke up in the night stabbed by a vision of street-boys helping themselves to the apples.

This woe was superseded by another quite as keen, as he observed that his passage was in the second cabin instead of the steerage. He knew to the fraction of a cent the difference in cost between the two and the sum tantalized him, night and day, as though some one were holding it just out of his reach.

To these two weights on his mind was added a third, which was almost more than he could endure. This was the perplexity, the bewilderment, the utter stupefied wonder which overcame him when he tried to imagine the motives lying back of the astonishing action of his benefactress. Given his scanty precedent acquaintance with Miss Middlesex, the situation would have dumfounded a far wiser man than Giuseppe; and I can produce no surer proof of the energy and force of Giuseppe's character than to report that he set himself at once to solve the riddle. His brother, the one who loafed at home on the sunny *piazza* before the Cathedral, would have argued contentedly that the *forestiera* was mad, like all the rest of them; but Giuseppe was not his brother. His nose had a masterful hook, his black eyes were very keen and set close together, and the same shrewdness and energy which

had sent him to New York while his brother continued to bask in the *piazza* now set him at the problem of Miss Middlesex's motive.

He had much time to meditate over this question, and many opportunities of seeing the lady, for she was in her element with a protégé so constantly at hand. She called him up to her steamer-chair early every day for what she termed "Italian talks" with him. They were more in the nature of monologues on the part of the American listened to with intense respect, but almost complete silence on the part of the Italian. She made it gently apparent to him that she was not of the herd of common givers who bestow with no thought, but that she really sympathized with the Italian longing for return to the mother-country, and for a peaceful life far from the roar and brutal struggle of America. She exhorted him to use his influence against the emigration of his friends, as a step fatal to their happiness.

She spoke eloquently; he listened sympathetically. The blue eyes and the black meanwhile crossed each other on investigations which had little to do with the subject of their talk. "How *can* I head Nora off from reporting to Ezra—in case—he really hasn't a—" thought Miss Middlesex, holding forth rapidly in blurred tenses and inaccurate genders upon her complete comprehension of the Italian spirit. And, "What the devil is she up to?" thought Giuseppe, twirling his

shabby hat around and around, and looking respectfully into its depths.

However, Miss Middlesex was used to precarious positions, and to maintaining her balance upon giddy peaks. She had not lived with her brother for many years without acquiring very steady nerves, and that perilous joy in the assumption of risks known only to devotees of the Game. She put a great deal of well-founded faith in her own proved ability to rise to any future situation, and in the meantime, extracted from the present a not inconsiderable amount of satisfaction.

She introduced Giuseppe to her friends on ship-board and told his story with a simplicity and modesty quite captivating to the gentlemen of the party. Giuseppe was already seeing a little light on his problems, and these encounters with Miss Middlesex as the center of her circle, cast another ray. He made a great deal more out of her English than her Italian. It has been said that Giuseppe's eyes were keen and set close together. It is also fitting to state that his hearing was excellent and his powers of observation acute to a remarkable degree. He spoke little and the lady spoke much. It is not improbable that at the end of the journey Giuseppe and Miss Middlesex's brother Ezra had some convictions in common.

On the way up from Naples to Orvieto, the situation grew more tense, and complex. Miss Middlesex, feeling upon her from afar the malevolent eye of a

certain elderly New York business man, grew genuinely nervous, and spoiled Nora abominably by allowing her all sorts of privileges which had been forbidden during the long years of her service. Nora responded, as we all would have done under the circumstances, by taking advantage of her new immunity and speaking out her mind impudently on the subject of "that button-eyed Wop." On the other hand, there came over the manner of the returning exile, a change which warmed the fair philanthropist's very soul. His silence and a certain reflective manner, as of one who ponders a difficult problem, had been transmuted to behavior "*much* more Italian" as Miss Middlesex put it to her maid. He gazed at her with an admiration so mingled with awe that she could take no offense, and from time to time poured out in a flood of musical Italian his gratitude to her saint-like qualities. She could not understand him completely, for in Italian conversation as in other affairs of life she was more accustomed to giving than receiving, but she caught enough to be sure of his drift, and while she gently deprecated his fervor she did not close her nostrils to the pleasant perfume of burning incense.

They left the train at the ugly little station of Orvieto, and Miss Middlesex looked up at the dream-like, city-crowned cliff before them. She was thrilled by the beauty of the scene. She was also passionately wondering if the curious medieval architecture above



her sheltered a Mrs. Giuseppe and four little Giuseppees. The moment of trial was at hand. She looked at her maid propitiatingly. "That bag's too heavy for you, Nora," she said kindly. "We'll leave it here at the station till we come back. We'll only be a short time, probably. I want to take the next train North."

They went up the funicular. They passed through the superb medieval gateway in the old wall. Miss Middlesex carried her head high. She had relieved Nora of a heavy wrap which lay across the maid's arm. The returning native looked very tense and determined.

The two ladies entered a carriage, and Giuseppe sprang to the seat beside the driver who saluted him with surprised ejaculations. Miss Middlesex turned to her maid with a look of triumph out of all proportion to the circumstances. She discovered that she had been so worked upon by her brother's poisoned suggestion that she had even doubted if Giuseppe came from Orvieto at all. If the voyage had lasted another week, she might have suspected him of coming from Portland, Maine.

They passed between streets almost too narrow to admit the carriage. Miss Middlesex looked about her breathing in with esthetic delight the picturesqueness of the scene. "What lines! What proportions!" she murmured to Nora, who was searching hastily in



her mistress' handbag for the bottle of smelling-salts. Giuseppe sprang from the carriage in front of a leprously spotted tenement building, leaning crazily to one side and flaunting so many rags of various colors from every opening as to give the impression of a huge box filled to overflowing with trash. Toward the doorway of this edifice Giuseppe made a rapid way while Miss Middlesex waited with a very decided quickening of her breath. She held her handkerchief to her nose but she looked up at the building before her with determined admiration. "What color!" said Miss Middlesex, looking at the rags. And then it all happened.

An amazed Italian woman rushed towards Giuseppe, followed by two little boys who reproduced with astonishing fidelity the hook-nose and bright dark eyes of the returned native. The woman cried aloud frantically. Giuseppe took her in his arms, the little boys clung wildly to his trousers. The passers-by began to stop and gesticulate, and pour out on Giuseppe a flood of questions. Miss Middlesex looked beatifically at Nora.

But this was only a beginning. With a backward glance at the carriage, Giuseppe began a brief harangue delivered with a rapidity which made all his previous linguistic efforts seem tame. He gesticulated and explained and urged and commanded all in a breath, and then, snatching up one of the boys, and taking his

wife by the hand, he ran back to the carriage, issuing a series of peremptory commands. At once Miss Middlesex found herself in the climax of her little drama. Seated comfortably in her carriage, secure from unpleasant contact with her beneficiaries she was flooded and overwhelmed by an outpouring of gratitude which exceeded even her imagination, flexible as that was when it came to conceptions of the gratitude due to Idealistic Philanthropists.

The wife knelt on the carriage step and kissed her gloved hand again and again, and the little boys shouted out blessings on her head and invocations to all the saints to protect and prosper her. Giuseppe had disappeared, but almost immediately came back followed by a half-grown girl who bore to him the same striking resemblance as the smaller children. It was unmistakable, even to the hostile Celtic eyes of Nora. There were now five of the Carnola family, chanting the hymn of praise which rose about Miss Middlesex's chariot, in which she sat blushing with pleasure and ardently desiring the presence of her brother Ezra.

An elderly priest, now passing by and looking with wondering eyes at the carriage, the kneeling and chanting Carnola family, and the fast gathering crowd, stopped with raised eye-brows of interrogation. Giuseppe, striking himself on the breast and gesticulating towards the lady in the carriage, explained the matter to him in glowing words, the adoring fervor of

which Miss Middlesex deprecated with a sweet humility. Raising her voice sufficiently to be heard by the crowd, and pouring out a flood of the most remarkable Italian ever heard in Orvieto, she explained to the priest, that she considered it a privilege to be able thus to express her love for Italy, her sympathy for Italians exiled to America's harsh life, and to restore to Giuseppe his natural, serene, ripe, and contented existence.

The priest listened attentively, and when she drew breath remarked, "That's fine. Carnola's a good fellow. It's all right to help him. His children are very promising." When Miss Middlesex gasped at the perfection of his English, he smiled slightly and said, "Oh, I had a parish on East 110th Street for fifteen years," and passed on.

All of Miss Middlesex's subtly strung nerves admonished her that the episode had been a jarring note in what was otherwise a perfect and harmonious dream. She felt that it was time to be off. She wished the Carnola family all joy, saluted the admiring crowd with a wave of her admirable hand, and signaled the driver to proceed. As the wheels began to move, and before the sound of the grateful blessings was out of her ears, she was already composing in her mind a letter to her brother Ezra.

This thought reminded her sharply of Nora. She looked at that worthy servitor with her old eyes of a

fortnight ago, and said crisply, "Put that bottle of smelling-salts away, Nora. I don't like to have you taking my things without asking permission."

Miss Middlesex spent the winter in Italy, and the summer in the Alps, before returning to her New York admirers. The glow of her good deed remained with her for long. The thought of what Giuseppe and his wife and his children must be thinking about her filled her with a joyful sense of the beauty of philanthropy. Every time that she told the story, she finished by drawing a little picture of the family sitting out in the cool of the evening before the picturesque old building, while Giuseppe related once more the story of his escape from the bondage of modern industrialism. She made the picture a little more real with each repetition, until she was as much moved by it as the most susceptible of her hearers. But she found that she pined, positively pined, without her brother. The ignoble and vegetable satisfaction in dull security is not for those who have once known the bright face of danger. She discovered, as she had several times before, that to face her brother over four red cards and one black one with a serene face of uplifted confidence made cathedrals and snowy mountain-tops tame diversions. She set her face towards home.

She wrote Ezra a very affectionate letter before starting. She told him that she simply missed him too

much to stay away any longer. She said she realized as she never had before how he had kept her from the dreary monotony of most single women, and how his companionship had prevented her from missing the traditional pleasures of the wife and mother. In short, she said, the older she grew, the more fondly dependent on him she was. And she believed every word of what she wrote. In fact, it was quite true.

She returned to New York on just such a dreary, slushy day as the day she had left it, and her thoughts went back to the family she had saved from this gloom. Her brother met her at the wharf, a rather unexpected attention on his part. It is possible that he, too, found life somewhat dull without his usual diversion. But he was not generous enough to refer to his defeat. Miss Middlesex pitied him, and magnanimously told him that he was not a particle balder than when she had last seen him. Nora was sent home on the street cars to salute her family after a year's absence.

Their car bore the reunited brother and sister swiftly away from the dark purlieus around the wharf, and in a twinkling was speeding along an avenue flanked with shining, plate-glass-windowed, gilt-lettered shops. It was before one of these that, after a familiar, vicious bang from the rear, the car stopped with unpromising abruptness and conclusiveness. The chauffeur came to the door to announce a blow-out and no extra tire along. The two passengers exchanged ex-

clamations of annoyance and planned rapidly. Mr. Middlesex would step into the nearest shop with a telephone, and phone for another car. His sister would wait outside.

She watched his retreating back idly. She saw him step into the shop, make an inquiry of a dark, slim, young girl; saw him disappear into a booth. A dark, broadly-built man, very well dressed, with gleaming hair and gleaming shoes and a well-filled white waistcoat, sauntered out from the door at the back of the shop, picking his teeth with a quill tooth-pick. He gave his waxed moustache a twist and looked about him with a proprietary air of satisfaction. As his black eyes roamed over the front window, they struck full into a fine pair of blue ones, now very wide and deep, which peered out from the window of a shining, costly car halted before the door.

He froze in his tracks, like a pointer dog, his uplifted hand bearing the tooth-pick petrified in position. From the car there was a rush which was no less swift for being voluminous; and Miss Middlesex's voice quivering with emotion, but lowered cautiously on account of her vicinity to the telephone booth, demanded heatedly, "How dared you! How *dared* you take the money I gave you—for *this*?" she was so agitated that she forgot her fluent Italian.

The petrified man came to life, to vigorous, dynamic life, and answered her in her own language. "The



lady gave the money to bring happiness—she say so many, many, *many* times!” His gesture sketched the interminable length of the days during which he had listened to that declaration, “And I spend it to get happiness. I am not sick, I am not a child, I am a man, like American is a man.”

Miss Middlesex cried out, stung to the quick by the serpent’s tooth, “Did you owe nothing to *me*?”

“The gracious lady desired thanks. I gave her thanks—much, much—*much* thanks.” This time his ample gesture sketching the infinite, recalled to Miss Middlesex, with a jumping twinge like that of a sore tooth, the scene before the tenement-house in Orvieto.

She gave back a step, as astounded at these remarks as though her Russian wolf-hound had argued with her about being kept in leash. “But—but—Orvieto—New York—the terrible struggle here—” she was incoherent, she was beaten.

He broke in impatiently, “Here are schools for the children—here are business for them when they grow up—the struggle—” he rose on his patent-leather toes and came down with an impassioned stamp, “I *like* the struggle—*because I can to went out on top!*”

The handle of the door of the booth rattled, the door was opened a crack, and Mr. Middlesex’s voice came through, “Hold the wire a minute. I’ll ask.” Backward he called impatiently, “Where is this place, anyhow? I didn’t notice.”



The girl answered fluently, "Sixth Avenue, between 10th and 11th." She spoke with a pure New York accent, adding, "Giuseppe Carnola's Store," and Miss Middlesex turned cold. In all her checkered life she had never been so near the catastrophe of a show-down as at that moment. Like an angel's message in her ear came the recollection of her brother's voice, a year ago, on the wharf. "Oh, I never can tell one Dago name from another."

The muffled voice from the booth ceased, the door-knob rattled, turned and Mr. Middlesex came out, "Hello, Nellie, you here?" he said, surprised. "Shopping so soon? They'll have the other car here in three minutes, they said."

Miss Middlesex caught her breath, slid her black fifth card under the other red ones, and rose to the occasion. "There was some very good-looking grapefruit here," she explained. With a hand that did not falter she pointed out the fruit and secured the package, paid for it and turned away.

Outside a taxi swung around the corner and stopped. "Here we are," said Mr. Middlesex, turning back from the door. As he spoke his eyes roamed vaguely over the commonplaces of a prosperous fruit-store and its prosperous Italian-American proprietor. Every seasoned nerve in Miss Middlesex's body stiffened.

But Fortune showed her usual partiality for the bold player. His eyes turned away from the store

and its owner upon his sister, "We're not so much delayed after all," he said, with all a New Yorker's intense satisfaction in that fact. They entered the waiting taxi-cab, and beheld Sixth Avenue once more streaming past their windows. With a burst of emotion which greatly astonished her brother, Miss Middlesex drew him to her and kissed him affectionately on both cheeks, "It *does* seem so good to be back here with you, again," she said fondly.



## THE CITY OF REFUGE

My husband's cousin, Russel, introduced his flashy-looking companion with the flourish he likes to put on whenever his queer associates come into contact with his Brahminical kindred; "Susy, my good friend Mr. Leo Wolff, the celebrated vaudeville impresario. Mr. Wolff, my cousin-by-marriage, Mrs. Peabody, the chief social light of the small old town to which the train now bears us."

He was turning over a seat as he spoke and the two settled themselves opposite me, as preposterous a combination as even Russel ever contrived. I welcomed heartily the big, black-browed Semite, with the big diamond in his scarf and the big plaids on his protuberant waistcoat. I, too, was a New Yorker before I married and now occasionally I droop in the rarefied Peabody atmosphere and long for a whiff from Broadway. Without exaggeration, Russel's friend could be said to carry with him a positive gust from that locality, his personality so cried out for its fitting background. I had seen many of him standing in brilliant theater vestibules on winter afternoons as I hurried out on my way to dinner after the matinee; but I had never thought I would see one on the

train to West Medlar, and I settled back, pleased enough by the picturesque break in the usual monotony of the trip home from Boston, and vastly diverted by the contrast between Russel's cynical scholarly face and his companion's florid exuberance.

"You can be of service to us, Susy," said Russel.

"Command me," I answered.

"You know everybody in West Medlar?"

"I have lived there fifteen years."

"My question is answered," Russel smiled. "Is there a man called Warner in your town?"

"There is. I know him well. He runs a greenhouse."

Russel stared. "A green-house in West Medlar! You'll be having taxi-cabs next!"

"Not a big citified affair," I explained. "Just a place where we can buy tomato and cabbage-plants in the spring and carnations in winter. Warner started in, when he came to town a few years ago, as a sort of itinerant gardener, and little by little has worked up to owning a bit of land and . . ."

"What first name does he give himself?" asked Russel, little interested in any attempt at a biographical sketch and showing it with his usual cool indifference to other people's feelings.

I laughed. "John . . . John Warner. It's too funny. He is so outrageously foreign. West Medlar thinks him either a Pole or a Russian and knows that

whatever else he may be, he is certainly a . . .” I stopped short. Living in an exclusively New England atmosphere one gets so out of the way of being cosmopolitantly tactful in conversation.

Mr. Wolff laughed tolerantly. “Yes, madam, he is a Jew, a Russian Jew.”

“And like some other Jews, a genius,” Russell put in. “And now tell us all you know of him. Has he married again, and is his child still living? We are come all the way from New York to Boston, a trip that should be made only in the inverse direction, and from Boston to West Medlar, only to see this Mr. John Warner. And we would have gone from New York to Pekin if we had learned of his being there.”

I had learned before this that Russel’s sweeping statements sometimes needed a little seasoning before acceptance, so I suppressed a smile, as I answered, “Dear me! How very unexpected. If I tell you what I know about him, you must reciprocate and tell me. . . .”

“But we know so much!” protested Russel, plainly itching for an opportunity to begin.

“All the more reason,” I said. “The trip to West Medlar is two hours long.”

“I could not tell,” said Russel, seriously, “I could not tell the story of the man you call John Warner in a hundred years . . . because I am not a genius.”

“Oh, come now, Mr. Peabody,” broke in his com-

panion. "A man who's written as many money-making plays as you, to say you're not a . . ."

"You recall the proof of my statement to my mind," said Russel, "and I repeat that the mere facts alone would require a genius to handle."

I recognized some of my cousin's usual methods for preparing his audience for a story, and yielded myself to them, amused and indulgent. "You quite pique my curiosity," I said, leaning back. "Tell me these astonishing facts and let me be the judge. I know the man you're talking about, you see. We always hire him to make garden for us, and his little girl is a great friend of my Ruth. So I know him well."

My commonplace remarks seemed to set the two men into an inexplicable emotion. "She knows him well!" cried Russel to his friend. "She knows him well, she says! She always hires him to make her garden and his child goes to school with hers!"

"Well, wouldn't that . . ." began Mr. Wolff, and found his stupefaction too great for words.

"What is the matter?" I asked, laughing at their theatrical manners.

They answered me with one voice. "He is Malachi Zorki," they said, and broke the force of that astounding announcement with no more words.

"Gracious Heavens!" I cried, as much taken aback as they could have wished, "No!"



They nodded silently, certainly.

"But Zorki is dead, isn't he?" I asked. "And if he isn't, why under the sun is he at . . ."

"That, Susy, is what Mr. Wolff and I are going to see."

"We're going to do more than see," said the manager grimly.

"We are going to bring him back to the stage," Russel went on. "And we are the two men to do it. Wolff knew him early and I knew him late. I lived in the apartment across the hall from his after he was married; and indeed I introduced him to the girl who became his wife."

Mr. Wolff was visibly surprised. "I knew you lived in that house, but I never heard before that you introduced him to . . . I don't blame you for keeping it dark." His surprise suddenly became recrimination, the violence of which, more than anything they had yet said made me curious to hear their story. "What in hell did you do it for?" he cried passionately.

His apologetic confusion for the use of profanity before a lady was such that he gave Russel no opportunity to answer.

"Don't say another word," I finally reassured him. "I hope I am too sensible a woman to take offence at a slip of the tongue. I will be more than glad to pardon you, if you will, one or the other of you, give

me some connected idea of what you are talking about."

"You begin it, Wolff," said Russel, "you knew him before I did."

"I knew him from the first," Wolff prided himself on the fact as if on a patent of nobility. "We came over on the same ship from Hamburg, twenty-five years ago, he making the rest of the steerage laugh at the way he took off a pot-bellied steward, and me running the show we gave to raise money for the sailors' fund. There we were, same at twenty as now at forty-five, and if we'd had as much sense as you could put on a pin-head, we'd ha' stuck to those lines and saved ten years . . . ten years that weren't so awful cherful for me, and that for Malachi must ha' been . . . well, I don't like to think about what they were for him!

"But we didn't know anything . . . like most folks at twenty . . . and when we got through Castle Garden I went along with Uncle Micah to learn to be a tailor . . . *me!* . . . and Malachi and his folks (he had his mother and four little sisters with him) fell in with a gang of confidence-men. We'd got to know each other pretty well during the voyage and when we said good-by we wished each other good luck. I was scared by the noise of the streets and I was sorry for Malachi because he didn't have any Uncle Micah to look out for him; but he was just

crazy to think he was in the New Country. Anybody'd think the street-cars were going to let him ride for nothing, just because he was in America. 'Good-by, Malachi,' I said in Yiddish. 'Hold on to your money and look sharp!' 'Are we not in the Promised Land?' he said. 'Since I have known one word from another have I striven to reach this hour.' And with that they went away, his eyes like fire . . . his eyes . . ."

"Ah, I can imagine his eyes!" broke in Russel.

"No you can't! Nobody that hadn't seen him then could imagine them. My Uncle Micah met him that day and, maybe twelve years later, when I took him to see Zorki do one of his best turns, Uncle Micah never applauded a clap. He just broke down and cried all over his beard. 'The child had better have died than live to change so!' he said."

"But I never thought his face unhappy before . . . before . . ." said Russel, wonderingly.

"You never saw his face when he was twenty," repeated Wolff. "He looked . . . well, Uncle Micah is an old orthodox Jew that talks the fancy lingo they do when they've read a lot of Hebrew, and he said that Malachi that day he landed looked like one of the shining company of Heaven."

He stopped an instant before he went on. "But you can bet your life he didn't look much like that when I saw him next, about ten years later. Do you

remember, Mr. Peabody, a sketch he used to give till we cut it out because it made his audiences too sick . . . a Jew peddler, it was, who hadn't had anything to eat for two days, trying to sell shoe-strings on lower Broadway on a cold day."

"No," said Russel. "That's one I never saw."

"You're lucky," his friend assured him, "You wouldn't ha' forgot it if you had. I saw him doin' the real thing one day in January and I don't have to shut my eyes to see it now. I didn't know him, but he remembered me and called me by my name and tried to smile as he reminded me of the show we'd given on ship-board. You know the way he used to try to smile when he was taking off the immigrant looking for a job?"

"The most poignant piece of acting I ever saw on the stage!" cried Russel.

"Well, he'd learned it before ever he went on the stage all right, all right, and he tried it on me that day. 'Good God,' I says, 'what's been happenin' to you?' and he says, 'I hate to beg, but can you loan me the price of a sandwich?' I didn't have but about two dollars between me and the world, but I took him into a hash-house and gave him a square meal of beef and potatoes. You remember when he used to do the bread-line man, how, when he'd passed the window and had his loaf he'd tear at it like a dog and . . ."

"Yes, I do remember," said Russel with a gesture of distaste, "but I always thought it an exaggeration . . . a blemish on his art."

"Art!" said Mr. Wolff, and lost himself in a contemptuous silence. "Well," he began again, "I didn't lose sight of him after that. We were pretty poor, but we didn't go hungry very often and, though he never said much about those ten years after he landed, I guess goin' hungry wasn't the worst he'd known by a good deal."

My inexperience was at a loss. "What could be worse?" I asked.

"Did you ever see him do the sweat-shop tailor, working eighteen hours a day and scared of his life the police will forbid him even that way of putting bread in his family's mouths? No? Well, I guess that was one of his 'effects' as Mr. Peabody calls them, that he'd learned firsthand. I asked him once what 'd become of his mother and sisters. He said 'They're dead,'—like that, 'They're dead.' It made my hair stand up the way he spoke. I says, 'What, all of them?' and he says, 'No, one of the girls lived.' I tell you, I never asked him any more after that." The full-fed flush of the man paled for an instant, "Gee! It makes me sick to think about it, what he must have seen . . . and suffered . . . and . . . ." He drew a long breath. "Well, anyhow, we hung together after that. He took

to acting in the two-for-a-nickel music-hall I was 'managing,' and we made enough to live on, mostly. You've probably read all about the rest in the Sunday papers, how we begun like I tell you, as cheap as dirt, and ended, working up, working up, always together, you know where we ended. I could sign a check for a hundred thousand without a blink, and the name of Malachi Zorki . . ."

Russel said, "If he chose to leave the vaudeville stage which he has so wonderfully dignified, he could do the greatest Lear the world has ever seen, Lear or Oedipus . . ."

"I don't know those parts," said Mr. Wolff, "but he can do Old Isaiah in this new play of yours so that he'll be doing it every night the rest of his life, and that won't be so bad for you and me, I tell you what."

"I wrote it with the recollection of him before my eyes," mused Russel, "but I never dreamed that we would find him alive and able to take the rôle."

"What makes you so sure he will?" I asked. ,

"Just let me lay my eyes on Malachi," said the manager, "and I don't need any gun to . . ."

Russel explained with his careless coolness, "Wolff has the power over his old comrade that every brutal, unscrupulous nature has over a sensitive, highly organized one. He is right in saying that Zorki is helpless before him."

The manager accepted his characterization with the

same callous calm with which Russel had bestowed it on him. "Oh, we'll get him all right," he said with a confidence which had in it something displeasing to me. Perhaps this sudden shrinking from the man showed in my face, for, "It's for his own good," he said defiantly.

"And very much for ours," added Russel, dryly.

"Do go on with your story," I urged, but the impresario was suddenly out of the mood.

"No, you go on, Peabody," he said, withdrawing himself into a silence somewhat grim. Russel addressed himself to me, remembering in his knowledge of the Peabody traditions that probably I knew nothing of the man they were discussing beyond his famous name.

"You never saw him, I suppose, Susy. You married and left New York before his rise to greatness?"

"I feel as though I must have seen him," I answered, "I have read so much about him. Why, I remember a series of articles you wrote, describing his . . ."

"Oh, I was just as incompetent as the rest to give any idea of the man. He was unique . . . you can no more describe him to one who has never seen him than you could describe the song of a violin played by a master. But it wasn't even his acting, incredibly convincing as that was, that gave him his most profound significance. It was his revealing to us of the



dramatic possibilities of that new phenomenon in the world . . . the immigrant. He took that figure, which had been treated jocularly, sentimentally, melodramatically, every cheap and obvious way our cheap and obvious dramatists could treat it, and he made it a figure of such moving pathos and power that to see it was a revelation of one's own capacity for emotion."

He turned to his friend, "You were in Boston the first night he played there?"

Mr. Wolff smiled in spite of himself, "Sure! Will I ever forget it?"

Russel went on to me, "It was the usual Boston audience, coldly incredulous of what they called the 'New York fad' for Zorki. He chose one of his shortest sketches for the first, one he called, 'Coming up from Sandy Hook.' It was the monologue of an immigrant who had striven for years to scrape together his passage-money, who now hung over the rail of the ship, watching the shores of his new Fatherland, and who told you dreamily what the hour meant to him. He had not said ten words in that droning voice of his, before he received his first tribute from the audience, a sudden utter silencing of crackling programs, shuffling feet, and coughs and rustlings. You could hear the faint patter of horses' feet on the asphalt street a block away as he went on in simple, disconnected sentences telling of his aspirations from

childhood up, of his pitiful small savings year by year out of minute wages, his farewell to his family, brave and confident that he would send for them, too, to enter the Promised Land, the long horrors of the ocean voyage in the steerage. . . . I remember that he suddenly laughed out loud as he spoke of these and said, . . . 'but what is that when you're going to be an American!' And then . . . Wolff! Do you remember the expression on his face in the long, long pause as he looked down on the little American flag in his button-hole? He said never a word, but a woman near me began to sob, and all over the house there ran a visible shiver of emotion.

"He went on, halting, every day, even commonplace in speech and manner, but St. John's vision of Heaven held no more fervor than his simple-hearted gratitude to the new country which was to take him in and confer on him . . . here was one of his finest touches . . . not material prosperity alone, not success over other men, but freedom, equality, brotherhood, kindness.

"After a time you felt you could not bear it, you so ached with shame. And then when your heartstrings were strained to the snapping point, he drew them suddenly tighter. He wheeled about, he looked up at some great object towering above the ship, he gazed at it with a face of . . . God! what a face! . . . and 'What is it? Who is it?' he whispered, repeating the

unheard answer to himself, 'It is *Liberty!*' The curtain went down on him standing there, looking up . . ."

He was silent. His companion drew a long breath.

"I suppose he was immensely applauded?" I asked.

"No," said Russel, unexpectedly. "No, he was never immensely applauded. When he let go his audiences they never remembered to applaud. They went into hysterics. That evening I was in the box with the Winthrops. The first thing I knew after that sketch, old Colonel Winthrop was struggling into his overcoat and jamming his hat on. 'Why, Ellery, where are you going?' called his wife, 'The program is just begun.' He fairly thundered at her, 'What should I be doing in a *theater*? I'm going out to start some sort of society that'll protect the immigrants!' And as a matter of fact he did, the first one in Boston."

The other nodded, "I've seen it take them that way lots of times."

"You see, Susy," Russel explained, "the device by which he finally and irrevocably broke your heart was not his depiction of the miseries we inflict on our alien citizens, but his continued belief in his ideal America, a belief indestructible in the face of the most crushing disproof. I am as little proud of being an American as all the other disillusioned, over-educated, native-born, and I deplore as being in the worst possible taste

any use of the so-called patriotic symbols; but I have burned all over with shame and a resolution to better things at all costs during a little sketch of Zorki's he called 'Visitors' Day in the Hospital.' "

The manager winced at the name. "Gee! It was a wonder, that one!"

"You won't believe to hear the outline of it, Susy, what a miracle he made of it. He was an older brother, visiting his sister in the hospital. She was there because of a wound inflicted on her by an accident in the factory where she worked; an accident, you gather, which would have been impossible if the smug, hypocritical factory-inspection law had been enforced. This comes out in their talk, as also does the fact that the two are the only wage-earners in a large family, and that they are trying desperately to educate their younger brothers and sisters. After a time the sister doses off, and the nurse tells the horrified brother that she is at the point of death. She is wakened by a band outside, a common street-band, playing 'America' as they pass. The girl's face brightens, she asks her brother if that isn't the American song and what are the words. Then, in a dead silence, he repeats in his stumbling, foreign accent, those idiotic words we have all laughed at so often . . . repeats them so that your skin creeps in sheer awe at the magnificent folly of his faith. 'My Country, 'tis of Thee, Sweet Land of Liberty,' he says . . .

and in the middle he breaks off with a sob. His sister has gone."

The manager kindled at the recollection. "There never was anybody in the world could touch him when he was . . . and you had to go and get him acquainted with that . . . !"

Russel returned to the thread of his story with a start. "But I began to tell you, Susy, how it happens that he is in West Medlar."

I looked at my watch. "Yes, you'll have to make a little haste. "We're more than halfway there."

For a time they resisted the temptation to diffuse reminiscence. "Wolff here, introduced me to him when I was still a reporter, and my admiration for his work made me attach myself as closely to him as he would allow."

"Aw, he allowed it, all right, all right. Mr. Peabody was tellin' you that I have a drag on Malachi because I'm big and know my own mind while he's thin and ain't got any backbone; but let me tell you, your cousin's got more drag than that, because he's educated while Malachi can only just read. Most anybody could lead Malachi 'round with a string, he's so simple in his head, but Mr. Peabody don't need no string . . . he just crooks his finger and Malachi comes."

"The truth is, Susy," explained Russel, "Zorki was like many other geniuses, absolutely childish in

everything but his art. He was simple to the point of being tiresome; but he was an affectionate creature, and one forgave his dullness for the sake of his astounding acting. It is true that he honored me with a great deal of his esteem."

At this Mr. Wolff made an unpleasant sound in his throat.

"My friend here means by that snarl," said Russel, smoothly, "that I repaid him ill by taking him off with me one summer to a village in New Hampshire and introducing him to Elmira Warner, the teacher of the district school. If it was a bad turn I did him, neither he nor I suspected it at the time. I never saw a more romantic idyll than their courtship nor a more supremely happy marriage."

The Jew thrust out a thick, red lower lip. "Aw, happy! Sure they were! And how long was it before his work on the stage was like a . . ."

Russel broke in defensively, "It wasn't really till after the baby came that he . . ."

An old anger of the other rose hotly at this mention. "Oh, damn that baby!" he cried furiously. This time he did not apologize, but fell to gnawing his shinningly manicured finger-nails.

"I lived in the apartment opposite them, Susy, and I saw it all . . . the astonished, almost stupefied, gratitude he felt for the commonplace happiness and peace his ordinary little wife gave him . . . such stupid,

tedious happiness as any brick-layer who has married a cook might have. He did not seem to himself large enough to take in the wonder of it. That he, the struggling, ignorant immigrant (he never realized the fact of his national fame) should have a home all his own, an educated wife whose one thought was to please him, and finally a child, a native American child . . . she *was* a nice baby, too," he added, evidently with a picture from the past before his eyes.

"Nice!" shouted Wolff, "Lord!"

"And Zorki," went on Russel, "adored his baby daughter as he adored his wife, beyond any words of mine to tell you. All his years of heart-break seemed annihilated! He was created anew by the extremity of his happiness. He hung over the child, poring upon her vacuous, rosy face as though no man before him had ever been intrusted with such a treasure."

"Yes, and I'd have to call him down, night after night, for goin' through his turn like he was a sleep-walker!" put in the manager, bitterly.

"Oh, yes, there was no doubt about it, his work began to lose in power. Going straight from his warm nest of homely comfort he could no longer visualize the figures out of his earlier life. Wolff was the first to notice it . . ."

"I'll never forget the first time I did! By George! my heart come right up in my throat to hear him . . . that flat, empty voice that always makes me turn down



amateur applicants. I says to myself, 'Good God! What's happened to Malachi?' and I went around to the back to meet him when he got through. He come off, grinning all over, . . . he that used to have the cold sweat stand out all over him . . . and 'She's got a tooth!' he says."

Russel made a sweeping gesture. "And there, Susy, you have it all. Wolff took him to task in his . . . well, it's not a gentle way! And I saw it next and tried to stir him up to his danger. He never had been able to believe that his prosperity was anything but a dream, and he was painfully quick to fear its disappearance. When the newspapers began to comment on his decadence, his distress was overwhelming. Wolff and I thought there was no other way to rouse him to greater efforts than by working on his fears, though I see now that we overdid the matter. We neither realized into what a nightmare of terror we must have plunged him. He had no other trade, as he used to put the matter in his simple way; like the inspired child he was, he had let his earnings slip through his fingers (Wolff saw to it that he never had more than was good for him, anyhow), and I suppose he must have seen suddenly yawning before him the abyss out of which he had climbed. I used to see him looking at his wife's fragile prettiness with horror, and he drew away from the child sometimes . . . she was nearly two by this time and liked to play with

him . . . as if he feared to recognize her existence. I dare say he was thinking he might drag them down with him to the hell of tenement-life which had killed his other family. At any rate, things grew worse and worse, till word came that the dean of the critics of New York, old Lawrence Elliott, whose word everybody took as law, was coming in person to see if Zorki had gone off as much as people said. I took the actor to one side and . . .”

“Yes, I guess we all of us got it into Zorki’s head that that evening was a good time to take a brace,” said the manager with a smile I did not like. “And he did! Do you remember how he did ‘Fourth of July on Hester Street?’”

“Oh, he acted well, horribly well. Elliott was screaming with enthusiasm. And when I went around to the stage door to go home with Zorki . . .” Russel stopped and set his lips together as though a sudden nausea had taken him.

“Zorki was a little under the influence of liquor, madam,” explained Wolff, elegantly.

“He was sickeningly drunk,” said Russel, “and I had to take him to a hotel to sleep it off, while I went home and lied to his wife about his being called out of town. It was the first time they had been separated since their marriage, she told me.”

Wolff burst out with an ejaculation of disgust. “Aint it! Nobody but farmers ought to get married!

Well, anyhow, we got a column and a half of gilt-edged stuff out of Elliot in the next Sunday's Chronicle."

"Yes, and when I congratulated Zorki on the favorable review, he groaned aloud like a man with a knife in him. 'What shall I do?' he said. 'What shall I do?' I think he gave up from that moment, although he struggled for a long time afterwards. It's not a pretty remembrance, that time afterwards, with its everlasting ups and downs. He drank . . . everything from gin to absinthe. He took drugs, oh, combinations you never heard of, strychnine, caffeine . . . anything he could hear was a brain stimulant . . . and he acted, by Jove! he acted!

Of course he used to scare his wife almost to death sometimes. I couldn't always keep him from home when he got going. He'd come to himself then, half-crazy with remorse, and horrified to see little Mollie shrink from him when he tried to pet her. Then he would keep straight for a time, until audiences began to grow cold at his listless renderings. The news spread about among the knowing ones that he had to be kept up to his best by fear of public disapproval, and there were those who thought it clever to hiss him when he lagged a bit. Then he would begin to drink again and was off for another period of glorious acting on the stage, and at home alternations of sodden sleep, violences, and remorse."

The narrator stopped, looking as though he found the expression of my face amusing. "You look horrified, my dear Susy, and I dare say are fancying that Booth and Irving worked themselves up to Shakespeare by means of mixed drinks. Not in the least! They were men of brains and education. Zorki hasn't the gray matter of a rabbit, and no education, so that sheer, physical excitement is all that'll do the trick for him."

I never discuss things with Russel, but at this, thinking of the woman who had been Elmira Warner, I could not keep silence. "But is it right to insist on his doing the trick, as you call it, if he pays such a price for it? It's all very well for Booth and Irving to produce art, but aren't people like Zorki better off raising tomato plants?" I regretted speaking as soon as the words were out of my mouth, so eloquent of an amused contempt for my standards was the glance the two men exchanged. "Art's art, Susy, no matter how its made, out of brains, or out of the morbid secretions of a personality. If you'd ever seen the superb trick he could turn off, you'd say, as we do, that no price is too great to pay for it. Besides, we need him."

Without condescending to any more comment on my objection than this, he went on, "The thing dragged on. I don't remember how many times he went around the vicious circle. There was one

summer when they went off into the country, and Zorki lived as straight as a string for three months. He and his wife returned from that trip looking like new people, and the child was as fond of her father as he of her. He put off going back to the stage until their funds ran low and then tried it without drink, until some reporter, looking for a good story, wrote him up as an example of the inevitable degeneracy that comes with prosperity. That made Wolff worry about the door-money and me about Zorki's art, and just as we began on him again, his wife told him that they could expect another child, with all the extra expenses that go with it. Heaven knows what mixture of drugs and alcohol he took to using, but it made him half-crazy all the time. Then one morning Zorki came battering at my door about three o'clock, screaming that his wife was dying. I rushed across the hall, found her in convulsions and calling incessantly, "Don't hurt Mollie! Don't hurt little Mollie! Don't hurt little Mollie!" while the child, evidently unconscious of any danger she might have been in, and still only half-awake, looked at us sleepily over the covers of her little bed. I sent Zorki for the doctor, and tried to quiet his wife. But when the doctor came, he shook his head."

There was a pause. If I could have commanded my voice enough to speak, I would have implored Russel to say no more, but so vivid was my horrified visualiz-

ing of the story he was telling me so dryly, that I could only stare at him dumbly.

"She died three days later," he ended.

He cleared his throat. "And then he disappeared, Susy, he, and little Mollie, and we thought, of course, that he had carried her down with him into the river. But the other day, in the oddest way we learned that he is in your town."

"And now, Mrs. Peabody," said the manager, "you promised to tell us all you know about him."

A sudden illumination carried me at one burst into the middle of my story. "Oh," I cried. "Now I understand why he . . . I never could see before . . ." I went back and began at the beginning. "Little Mollie has a wonderful talent for recitation. You know on Friday afternoons the children speak pieces in school; but as soon as her father heard of this he forbade her doing it. He went to the school-house, so the teacher told me, and frightened her, he was so violent; and though he is foolishly, extravagantly indulgent to the child he has never given way to her in that. She loves to do it, of course."

"How do you know she's good at it if he won't let her do it?" asked the impresario acutely.

"Oh, you can't keep her from it. She learns the pieces of poetry in the Readers by heart, just reading them over once or twice, and she goes about declaiming them on the street, in the play-ground . . . why,

hardly a day passes that she's not with the children in our yard, and they're always getting her to recite for them. She's wonderful! I've heard her when she thrilled me."

"How old is she?" asked Mr. Wolff.

"Eleven, just the age of my Ruth."

The manager smiled. For a moment he said nothing, but that smile gave me a sense of discomfort which sharpened into active alarm when he added, "I haven't long to wait for her, then. Gee! What a couple they'll make!"

"Oh, Mr. Warner will never let her go on the stage!" I cried, my heart sinking at the indiscretion of my describing the child to him, "Somebody suggested once, in all innocence, that she would end as a great actress, and the gardener knocked him down and tried to kill him. I remember well, there was a great excitement in town about it. Everybody had always supposed Warner to be such a shy, peaceable man. He had always gone about his business so quietly, never speaking to any one. My husband was Justice-of-the-Peace that year, and he felt so sorry for Mollie's father that he went down to the green-house to see if he couldn't persuade him to be quiet. He found him composed, he said, and quite ready to promise anything. "Only they must not say such things to me!" My husband asked him (there are so few foreigners in West Medlar that we have very vague ideas about



their ways) my husband asked him if it was part of his religion that women should not go on the stage. He said the man stared at him out of his big, sunken eyes, and said slowly, 'Yes, Mr. Peabody, it is part of my religion.' "

The two men looked at each other.

"Oh, never mind, we'll get him all right," said the manager with a confident laugh,—and on that note the story ended as we left the train at West Medlar. It was a note which cast into a sudden resolute plan the emotions my traveling companions had aroused in me.

It was four o'clock of a cold, rainy winter afternoon. "Won't you come up and have a cup of tea with me?" I asked, trying to speak casually, but taking Mr. Wolff by the arm and literally forcing him into the surrey which waited for me there. "You will have plenty of time to see Mr. Warner later. You can't start back to Boston till nine o'clock to-night."

"You see, Wolff, we're out of the suburban belt of frequent trains," said Russel, smiling as he took his seat in the carriage. "I don't suppose, Susy, that the cloistered calm of the station is broken until this evening."

I had always had my opinion of my husband's cousin, an opinion which was not now changed by his instant resumption of his usual light chatter after such a story as he had told me, and upon such an errand

as he was proposing to himself and his companion. I tried to laugh as I answered him, but found I could not keep my voice steady as I said, literally enough, "Oh, yes, that's the only one that goes back to Boston, but there are several that go through in the opposite direction."

My hands were trembling in my muff, and when we reached the house I could scarcely go through the necessary ceremonies of installing my guests in our parlor before I made an excuse and ran upstairs to the children's playroom. "Ruth!" I called as I ran, "Ruth!"

I was so afraid she might not be there that I gasped in relief as her little figure appeared in the door. "Well, Mamma," she began, "your train must have been . . ." she stopped short, her own startled face showing me as in a mirror that I must make a greater effort for self-control.

"It's nothing, Ruthie dear," I said, beginning to hurry her into her wraps. "Mother's a little tired, that's all. I want you to take a message for me down to Mr. Warner's. I want you to say to him exactly these words: 'My mother sent me to tell you that Mr. Leo Wolff and Mr. Russel Peabody are stopping at her house on their way to see Mr. Warner. She is giving them tea. They will probably go on in about an hour.' Now say the message over, dear, so that Mother can be sure you have the names straight."

I tried very hard to make it sound like a casual message, but something of my excited resolution must have vibrated in my voice, for Ruth looked frightened and set off running down the street at a breakneck gallop as though I had sent her for the doctor.

I went back to the parlor, I served tea to my guests, I chatted with them as entertainingly as my rapidly beating heart would allow, and I do not think I once took my eyes from the clock. Although I can truthfully affirm on my oath that my one idea had been that if Zorki did not want Wolff to see Mollie, he could send her away to a neighbor's, still when I heard Ruth crying bitterly as she stumbled up the porch steps, I can not deny that I knew instantly what had happened. "Pardon me," I said, rising. "I think my little girl must have had an accident. Just help Mr. Wolff to another cup of tea, will you, Russel?"

Out on the porch, "What is it?" I asked as Ruth threw herself into my arms. "They're gone!" she cried.

"What do you mean! Wasn't Mr. Warner there when you . . ."

She nodded and tried to speak, but her tears choked her. "Stop crying, Ruth!" I said sharply, "and tell me exactly what happened.

She swallowed hard and tried obediently to be coherent. "Mr. Warner was cutting some carnations and Mollie was holding the basket, and I said I had

a message for him and he turned around and smiled at me and said, 'What is it, Ruthie? Does your mamma want some onions?' and so I said your message and he . . ." The child broke out into screaming sobs as at some dreadful recollection.

"He didn't hurt you, did he?" I cried, alarmed.

"No! No!" wept Ruth, "it was the way he looked. . . . He snatched Mollie by the arm and started out to the street, running. Mollie hung back and said, 'Where you goin', Poppa?' but he wouldn't say a thing but just, 'away! away!' I ran along beside them to the station and the train was just coming in and he ran right up to it, and then he told me to say good-by to Mollie because they were going away and never would come back. They got on board, and I cried and Mollie cried and looked at me out of the window and the train began to go, and . . ." my child clung to me, sobbing.

"I hope she isn't badly hurt?" I heard Russel's voice behind me say, with his usual cool unconcern. He and his friend appeared, ready for the street.

"No, oh, no," I answered, sitting down and drawing Ruth up on my lap. "Just frightened a little."

Mr. Wolff stepped forward and took my hand in his soft, fat fingers. "Good-by, Mrs. Peabody. I'm glad to have made your acquaintance."

I met him more than halfway, crying out fervently. "Not nearly so glad, Mr. Wolff, as I that I met you!"

Russel, lingering on the top step of the porch, and looking out at the cold bareness of our wintry village street, indulged himself in a little of his whimsically high-colored rhetoric. "Ah, the hardships of the life of a conscientious dramatist! To be forced to leave the bright, cheery, steam-radiator of my cousin for this scene of desolation . . . I, who had sworn never more to set foot in New England in winter."

He clapped his hat on his head with a flourish. "But art . . . sacred art!" he looked down at me, his hard, pale, handsome face touched with a faint amusement, which I understood to be provoked by what he took for a pose of somewhat ostentatious maternal solicitude, as I sat there clasping Ruth in my arms. "Ah, Susy, you're lucky that your life is one of sweet domesticity . . . that you are not concerned with the creative arts."

I rose up, holding my small daughter close to me, "No," I said, shivering a little. "No, I am not concerned with your creative arts."

## AN UNTOLD STORY

AT a jolt from a specially outrageous water-bar, Mr. J. Farwell Allen woke and swore loudly. The thick plate-glass of his limousine prevented this sound from reaching the ears of his chauffeur and confidential servant, who sat side by side on the front seat, presenting to their jolted employer a pair of impeccably liveried and imperturbable backs. The backs would have been no less imperturbable if the oath had been heard. People who served Mr. J. Farwell Allen either grew accustomed to profanity or sought other positions. The two present incumbents of the front seat of the big car were, in fact, quite prepared for more than the usual dose to-day. In the great square, marble-columned house they had left a couple of hundred miles behind them, the extreme violence of the quarrel raging between the master and mistress of the establishment had been the subject of much hilarious comment among the twenty-odd servants. Betting on what Mr. and Mrs. Allen were scrapping about this time was a recognized sport in the Allen kitchen. The causes assigned varied according to temperament and race. Selma Gustafson, the brawny Swedish masseuse and lady's maid, whose trained manipula-

tions were so essential to Mrs. Allen and her daughter, laid it to jealousy. "She read in de newspa-a-per how he schpend ten t'ousant for a house for dat Bolita Bella," averred Selma Gustafson with a pleased smile on her broad face. But Michael O'Leary, first assistant to the butler, said scornfully, "Aw g'wan, Dutchy. Bolita Bella's the back number—and so're you! It's Elsie Claire now, her that the real name of is Mamie Rourke."

The butler, who was English and felt a bitter contempt for his employers, never varied from his theory that it was the missus throwing it up to him that he'd been a common workman when she married him, while she had been one of the wealthy Bradleys, and that her money gave him his start for his first speculation. The gardener, an American, Perkins, a married man who lived with his wife and children by the great bronze gates which shut out the contaminating vulgar, had another idea, namely, that the old man was upset by the latest going-on of his daughter, Mrs. Merle, who was flirting so with Bertie Nichols that Mrs. Nichols was thinking of beginning divorce proceedings. Mrs. Merle was the only child of Mr. and Mrs. J. Farwell Allen. She had run away with a vaudeville actor when she was eighteen. She was now but twenty-five, and had been twice married and divorced. Perkins, the gardener, was at some pains to keep his little son and daughter away from the two quarrelsome



little boys of differing surnames who, on the rather rare occasions when they saw her, called Mrs. Merle "Mamma."

Demetrios Xenapoulos, the confidential servant, preserved a cynical skepticism about any of these immaterial causes for his employer's frequently recurring black moods, and laid them with certainty to the increasing number of highballs which he was called upon to concoct for Mr. Allen. "The old souse is pickled to his bristles," said Demetrios, with the accent of one who knows. Demetrios had grown up on Second Avenue, in his father's fruit store, and drew on an inexhaustible East Side vocabulary, but he had also worked his way through New York University, and had an equally fluent command of astonishingly correct English. He slipped from one to the other with as much ease as (whenever his master was looking at him) he changed his alert, malicious, intelligent face into the decent, deferential blankness of a well-trained servant. He had become almost indispensable to the broker, and considered that he knew whatever was to be known about his habits, a not inconsiderable amount of information being involved.

Mrs. Merle's second husband, now divorced but still living on the contemptuous bounty of his wife's family, nervously hoped that his ex-father-in-law's rage did not mean that his money-matters were awry, an idea which was laughed down by every one else.

All America knew that Old Man Allen had Wall Street by the tail. Of those who listened with malicious satisfaction to the echo of furious voices and hideous words, and who from under decorously down-dropped lids, looked with evil pleasure at raging countenances and blood-shot eyes, McEvert, the chauffeur, alone made no mocking comment. He was an unimaginative, literal-minded man, all whose emotions were centered on obtaining a truck-farm and becoming a market-gardener. The rumblings of the familiar storm meant only one thing to him. When he heard that "she" had thrown a plate of hot soup at the old man's head, McEvert got up gravely, went out to the garage, looked at the gasoline gauge of Mr. Allen's own limousine, tested the spark plugs and strapped on a couple of extra tires. The end of family disagreements in the Allen family usually meant a summons from Mr. Allen at some extraordinary hour of the night to start out in this car, which he had specially arranged for just such sojourns. Sprawled from one corner of the tonneau to the other, the millionaire had slept on the soft cushions through many a restless, nightmare-hunted drive; and a folding table served him to spread his papers about, his sacred papers over which he pored with the fierce glare of white-hot concentration so much dreaded by his less gifted competitors on Wall Street. Some of his greatest and most formidable

combinations had been worked out in that plate-glass, perambulating cage.

After waking up on this occasion and expressing his feelings at finding his mouth the abode of all the evil tastes and furry sensations possible, Mr. Allen took a drink from a gold-mounted flask which snapped into a holder against the dark-blue satin linings; opened the big morocco-leather portfolio which hung against the opposite wall, got out a package of papers, held together by a rubber band; and laying them out in order on the table, began to make notes. As he worked, his face cleared; the clouded, rheumy eyes brightened, the grim mouth tightened and set. He was a formidable figure as, bent over his papers, like a sorcerer over his charms, he was borne along through the gold and glory of the spring morning. They were following a solitary road, running straight through the forest. McEvert, the experienced, who had noted the opening of the portfolio out of the corner of his eye, ran softly and carefully, with a competent gaze directed uniquely on the inequalities of the road. Demetrios having for the moment no cares, looked around him at the wooded slopes of the mountains rising steeply above them, at the wildness of the rocky glen down which they presently descended, at the clear racing violence of the stream beside the road. He was by no means an insensible soul, Demetrios, and presently he remarked to his companion,

"Ain't such a worse!" He referred to the landscape.

"Any decent country would prohibit water-bars by law," answered McEvert grimly, easing the big car down over a bump.

"Where the hell are we, I wonder?" speculated Demetrios, in a conversational tone.

"I *know* where we are," responded McEvert, glancing first at the speedometer and then at the blue book fastened open on the steering-wheel. "We're a bit out of Hillsboro village, with Rutland thirty miles to the north."

The Greek indicated with a gesture, the dense forest on either side of the road. "They don't need a traffic cop yet."

"Oh, we'll soon be out of this," said the Scotchman, "we're going down fast. The village'll not be much of a place either, likely . . ."

A voice came through the speaking tube, the voice of good days, loud, confident, not unkind. "Hey, McEvert, get me to a telephone, will you? I want to talk to the New York office."

With their servants' eyes which see, although they do not look, they saw him lean back in his seat, and gather the papers up with a well-satisfied air. "Wall Street short-ends had better scramble off the lid," murmured Demetrios, "When the old man grins . . ."

The grade declining into a moderate slope, McEvert took off the brake and the car shot forward. Out of

the back of their heads the two servants saw their master take another drink from the gold-mounted flask. Ten minutes later they came into a village street and were directed to the telephone central above a country store further up the street. At the door of the car, Demetrios, attentive and deferential, received minute instructions, "You get the office, and tell Peterson to go to Reinhardt's private room and call me up here on Reinhardt's private line. I'll come in when he's ready." After the Greek had disappeared into the ugly, paintless square building, the man in the limousine rubbed his large, soft, white hands together in a gesture of great satisfaction. The spring sun shining vividly in through the plate-glass caught on the big diamond ring on his ring-finger and sent out a thousand tiny rays of refracted light. In the tall elm above the store, a robin burst out into a loud, cheerful, boastful chant. The millionaire looked about him idly, snapping the rubber band which held his papers. McEvert noted the sound. It was one of the signs of a good day. After a time it stopped. McEvert listened for it with some anxiety, but it was not resumed.

After some moments, a voice which McEvert did not recognize, asked him through the speaking tube, "What the devil is this place?" McEvert, the competent, answered, "Hillsboro, Vermont, sir." He added, knowing that the name could mean nothing to

the New Yorker, "Albany is about sixty miles to the south, sir." There was no answer from the tonneau. McEvert ventured a half-glance around, and saw that his employer was staring very hard at the church, a white wooden edifice with a steeple, like any one of ten thousand. He looked very queer, McEvert thought. His mouth was a little open,—the mouth which scarcely opened to let out words—and there was a leaden color on his pendulous cheeks. It occurred to McEvert that he looked like a man in a bad dream, unable to wake up.

After a time Demetrios emerged, stepped to the door of the limousine, and said in a clear, well-modulated voice: "Mr. Peterson was out, sir, but I had them send a messenger after him. I think he will be on the wire in less than ten minutes." He waited a moment, and then mounted nimbly again to the front seat. As he sat down, he slid from the corner of his mouth this bulletin: "Hell's to pay again."

"Was he staring at the church yon, like a man daft?" asked McEvert, in the same soundless voice. They were both looking straight before them, as they communed.

"Nope, he wasn't staring at nothing at all." Demetrios added with an accent of supreme indifference, "Maybe he's having some kind of a fit."

"Ah, weel, I'm remembered in his will," murmured McEvert hopefully. Then they both sat silent, look-



ing straight before them, presenting a pair of impeccably liveried backs to the man in the tonneau.

But he was looking at something else. . . .

Spring had been late that year, and when it came, fairly tumbled over itself as it ran into the arms of summer. The hepaticas were still in bloom when the azalea burst into pink flames, and the elm twigs were faintly clouded with green before the white birches were fairly out. All the birds shouted with excitement over the lack of proper order in the woods, and the May sun sent down a shower of hot benediction on this stirring life which was sent back, loaded with incense from sweet fern and pines.

Under a group of young white birches, high on the pasture-slope, they sat, the boy and girl, with wild-strawberries reddening all around them. They were looking down into the green and vibrant valley, and across at the blue mountains beyond. Their lips and finger-tips were pink with wild-strawberries, and their eyes were star-like with youth and love. The girl was pointing down to where the main road, flung along the valley like a bit of white string, followed the turns and twists of the river running swift and strong with the last of the melted snows from the mountains. "There's the schoolhouse: that white spot there, near the village. You see how long a stretch of the road I can see from the window: and I know it's you as



far as I can see the black patch your team makes, and I always get so red, and then all the children giggle and laugh and turn their heads to watch you go by." She put her head on her lover's shoulder with a contented sigh. "It makes me feel so foolish," she said, "and it's very bad discipline for the children to laugh at their teacher."

He drew her close to him. "What do *you* care!" he said. "A lot of kids like that. You ought to see how the fellows down in the village josh me. They hollered out the other day to be sure and not forget to buy some wash-tubs, seein' I was goin' to set up housekeepin' so soon, and I just called back as soon as I got any I'd invite them to take a wash. I don't care how much they talk. Fact is I *like* to have 'em talk. Keeps me in mind of you and what's coming."

She drew back and launched a soft reproach at him. "Oh, you have to have somebody keep you in mind of it, do you? I never forget it, not for a minute, not even when I'm asleep. If you should wake me up at midnight, I'd say right off, 'The 22d of July, at eight o'clock in the evening!'"

"Well, I sleep pretty sound, myself," he answered jokingly, "I won't swear I don't forget about it then. Why, it's just two months from to-day, isn't it?"

She was in despair at his obtuseness. "Think of your not having known that before!"

He took her in his arms again, and began that fond

intimate examination of her face which is one of lovers' games. "What a pretty nose you've got, and I like your eyes the best of any girl in the world, Eva," he said, looking deeply into them. "They're so blue and big, they're so clear,—it's so far down to the bottom,—like the deep place in Milton's Pond."

"You can look and you can look," she murmured, "and you won't find anything there but your own self."

He set his lips to hers in a long kiss, as hot, as sweet, as living as the sun on their young heads. Their eyes closed dreamily. The odor of crushed pennyroyal rose up fragrant. In the tree over their heads a robin broke out in a loud chant. "He's calling for rain," said the girl, detaching herself gently. Her lover rebuked her, "How can you think of such things . . . ? You're always the one to pull away. Why, when I've got you in my arms . . ."

She looked at him with bright, moist eyes. "Don't you think that I . . . only it scares me to be so happy. It's awful to love each other so!"

"It doesn't scare me," he said boldly, and began with clumsy, gentle fingers to pull the hair-pins from her hair.

"What are you doing, Jim!" she protested, but with no energy. "I'll look like anything." She smiled fondly as she spoke.

"Well, I want to see what you *will* look like," he

said, and as the smooth brown coil fell over her shoulder and spread itself to a loose shimmering mass, touched and lifted by the spring air, he fell silent, looking half fearfully at her clear young face thus framed and shaded by the dark shining hair.

"Well, what *do* I look like?" she said with a happy certainty of his answer. But he did not answer. He bowed himself and touched his lips to her dusty shoe. She turned pale at this—pale and awestruck. "You oughtn't to do that!" she said in a low tone.

"That's the way I feel," he said. "You're so much better than I am . . ."

"No, I'm not! I'm not," she cried in eager self-abasement. "I have lots of horrid things about me. You'll find them out soon enough. And you know you're just as straight as a string!"

"I am when I'm with you all right," he said, "but there's an awful mean side to me. I know it. It's my Grandfather Blaisdell coming out in me. He was the low-downest old cuss, you know. He made a lot of money in Civil War contracts and died ever so rich. I've heard a lot of stories about him, and they make me think of myself. I've got just that same hankering to get on, somehow, anyhow, faster'n what's right,—and what they tell about his drinking!"

She put her hand over his mouth, "Oh, Jim, stop, I can't bear to have you talk so, even in fun. Don't I know you through and through!"

“Well, the Grandfather Blaisdell in me is awful scared of you! He always lights out when you come around.”

She laughed, a happy, confident laugh. “You do say the funniest things, Jim! Why *shouldn't* you want to get on? *I* want you to! There wasn't anybody more tickled than I when you got the job of building the Moffat house all by yourself. I felt so set-up over your hiring men to work under you. Why, I calculate that you're going to be *the* master builder of all this valley. Now Mr. Clinton's got so old, there's a chance for a young man to take his place and you're the very one. I expect before my hair's gray it'll be so that whenever anybody for fifteen miles around wants anything built, from a silo to a house to live in, he'll come looking for you to take the job.”

The young man looked at her and nodded thoughtfully. “Yep, I bet I can do it.”

She leaned against him and looked off at the mountains on the other side of the valley. Her eyes were mystic and deep. “Anybody couldn't think of a lovelier way to earn your living . . .” she murmured. “Just think, as we get older, we'll be a part of everybody's life. All the married people will look at you and say, ‘He built the house we moved into as bride and groom,’ and the young folks will think ‘He built the house I was born in, or the barn I played in.’ You'll make the bridges folks go to town and come

back on, and you'll keep the Town Hall mended up for the town-meetings, and when the church has to be fixed, they'll come to you . . .” she fell into silence, her cheek against the smooth ironed cotton of his clean Sunday shirt. From time to time she rubbed her face up and down, like a little child nestling to its mother. “I just *love* you, Jim,” she murmured drowsily. There was a long pause.

“I know a quicker way than that to get on,” he said finally. “Only you'd need to have some money to begin with.”

“What's that?” she asked, with but a faint show of interest.

“You see that ridge over there?” he waved his hand at a foot-hill to the left of them. “Well, that's solid marble, just the kind they quarry in Rutland and Proctor. See that white patch sticking up through the bushes? That's the stuff. You could buy that up without letting the farmers know what for, and then run a bluff on the Rutland marble people that you were going to open up a rival quarry. If you ran the thing right, it wouldn't be six months before you'd have them buying you out at about five hundred per cent profit!”

She had followed his plans with only a dutiful attention, and now rejected them casually. “Oh that wouldn't be any way to do,” she said. She sat up and straightened his neck-tie. “That wouldn't be quite

right." She dismissed the matter with this comment, and asked, "Do you like this dress? Aunt Abigail said men always like red, and I thought I'd get me a red suit; but when it came right down to it, I couldn't seem to! Red's such a forward color. So I got pink instead. That's the next thing to it." She looked at him so anxiously that he laughed out. "What do you think your Aunt Abigail knows about the color men like? It takes an old maid to think she knows it all!"

"Oh, you *don't* like red?" she drew a long breath of relief. "Oh, I'm so glad. After I bought the pink, I saw that Bradley girl going by in the Burrets' carriage, and she had on a dress you could have lighted a match at."

"I didn't *say* I don't like red," he teased her laughingly. "Who's this Bradley girl you're talking about?"

She broke out into a happy laugh. "Isn't that just like you, Jim Allen, so wrapped up in your work, you never look at a girl. She's Mr. Burret's granddaughter, you know, and she comes here to visit sometimes. She's got quite a lot of money herself, too, as much as the Burrets. Her father and mother are dead. They say she's got an awful temper. I've heard folks tell about her acting up just like a baby in a tantrum when she can't get what she wants. She dresses awful loud, too."

She began to braid three gleaming grass stalks together to make a ring. "Oh, yes, you must have seen her: she was visiting the Burrets when you were fixing over their roof last month. I know that for sure, because Mrs. Colby (she does their fine laundry work) said she'd heard Miss Bradley say you were the handsomest man she'd ever seen." She lifted his strong, brown, workman's hand, and slipped the firmly woven green ring over his ring finger. Then with her head on one side like a bird's, looking at once arch and abashed, she began: "I, Eva Martin, take you, James Farwell Allen, to be . . ." when her courage gave way, and laughing, she hid her face on his shoulder. He put his arm about her, but he looked over her head at the foothill to their left. The white rocks shone in the sun. Presently, under his breath, he said, "She said that, did she?" The robin above them broke out into another fit of boastful chanting . . .

Demetrios heard a loud explosion of profanity behind him. His master, forgetful of the speaking-tube, was battering fiercely on the plate-glass wall. "Damn you, what are we waiting here for?" he cried, his lips twitching, his eyes glaring hotly from his apoplectic face. Demetrios said to himself that the old beast got beastlier every day. Aloud he said, "We are waiting for the telephone connection you spoke of, sir, the one with Mr. Peterson over the private wire."



The old man let fly a volley of oaths at him for an impudent scoundrel, and yelled at McEvert to drive on and be quick about it. The experienced McEvert asked no questions as to destination, but touched the starter. The car moved smoothly forward at a swift pace. A brown-haired young country girl with a pail of field-strawberries on her arm, turned at the sound, and sent an idle glance of curiosity at the rich, glistening car, and the very angry-looking old man within it. He scowled, drew back into the corner out of sight, and said with vitriolic acrimony through the speaking-tube, "You confounded nut-head! What are you driving through the village for? Turn around and go the other way, damn you!"

McEvert spun the car around deftly, reflecting that in only two more years he would have saved enough to buy the truck farm his soul coveted, and drove swiftly back over the road he had come. They passed the telephone office, whence they were hailed by an agitated Central, screaming that now she had the connection. Receiving no commands from the tonneau, McEvert drove steadily forward and in a moment had passed out of the village into a narrow country road.

Mr. J. Farwell Allen still sat drawn back in a corner of his car. He was looking down at his big flabby white hands, with their glittering manicured nails, and at the diamond on his ring finger.

A flash of white caught his eye, and he looked up. They were passing the schoolhouse. He leaned forward and pulled the curtains down with a jerk. Thereafter he was borne along in darkness.

## A THREAD WITHOUT A KNOT

### I

WHEN the assistant in the history department announced to Professor Endicott his intention of spending several months in Paris to complete the research work necessary to his doctor's dissertation, the head of the department looked at him with an astonishment so unflattering in its significance that the younger man laughed aloud.

"You didn't think I had it in me to take it so seriously, did you, Prof?" he said, with his usual undisturbed and amused perception of the other's estimate of him. "And you're dead right, too! I'm doing it because I've got to, that's all. It's borne in on me that you can't climb up very fast in modern American universities unless you've got a doctor's degree, and you can't be a Ph.D. without having dug around some in a European library. I've picked out a subject that needs just as little of that as any—you know as well as I do that right here in Illinois I can find out everything that's worth knowing about the early French explorers of the Mississippi—but three months in the Archives in Paris ought to put a polish on my disserta-

tion that will make even Columbia and Harvard sit up and blink. Am I right in my calculations?"

Professor Endicott's thin shoulders executed a resigned shrug. "You are always right in your calculations, my dear Harrison," he said; adding, with an ambiguous intonation, "And I suppose I am to salute in you the American scholar of the future."

Harrison laughed again without resentment, and proceeded indulgently to reassure his chief. "No, sir, you needn't be alarmed. There'll always be enough American-born scholars to keep you from being lonesome, just as there'll always be others like me, that don't pretend to have a drop of real scholar's blood in them. I want to *teach!*—to teach history!—American history! . . . teach it to fool young undergraduates who don't know what kind of a country they've got, nor what they ought to make out of it, now they've got it. And I'm going in to get a Ph.D. the same way I wear a stiff shirt and collars and cuffs, not because I was brought up to believe in them as necessary to salvation—because I wasn't, Lord knows!—but because there's a prejudice in favor of them among the people I've got to deal with." He drew a long breath and went on, "Besides, Miss Warner and I have been engaged about long enough. I want to learn enough to get married on, and Ph.D. means advancement."

Professor Endicott assented dryly: "That is undoubtedly just what it means nowadays. But you will

‘advance,’ as you call it, under any circumstances. *You* will not remain a professor of history. I give you ten years to be president of one of our large Western universities.”

His accent made the prophecy by no means a compliment, but Harrison shook his hand with undiminished good-will. “Well, Prof, if I am, my first appointment will be to make you head of the history department with twice the usual salary, and only one lecture a week to deliver to a class of four P. G.’s—post-graduates, you know. I know a scholar when I see one, if I don’t belong to the tribe myself, and I know how they ought to be treated.”

If, in his turn, he put into a neutral phrase an ironical significance, it was hidden by the hearty and honest friendliness of his keen, dark eyes as he delivered this farewell.

The older man’s ascetic face relaxed a little. “You are a good fellow, Harrison, and I’m sure I wish you any strange sort of success you happen to desire.”

“Same to you, Professor. If I thought it would do any good, I’d run down from Paris to Munich with a gun and try scaring the editor of the *Central-Blatt* into admitting that you’re right about that second clause in the treaty of Utrecht.”

Professor Endicott fell back into severity. “I’m afraid,” he observed, returning to the papers on his desk, “I’m afraid that would not be a very efficacious

method of determining a question of historical accuracy."

Harrison settled his soft hat firmly on his head. "I suppose you're right," he remarked; adding as he disappeared through the door, "But more's the pity!"

## II

He made short work of settling himself in Paris, taking a cheap furnished room near the Bibliothèque Nationale, discovering at once the inexpensive and nourishing qualities of *crémeries* and the Duval restaurants, and adapting himself to the eccentricities of Paris weather in March with flannel underwear and rubber overshoes. He attacked the big folios in the library with ferocious energy, being the first to arrive in the huge, quiet reading-room, and leaving it only at the imperative summons of the authorities. He had barely enough money to last through March, April, and May, and, as he wrote in his long Sunday-afternoon letters to Maggie Warner, he would rather work fifteen hours a day now while he was fresh at it, than be forced to, later on, when decent weather began, and when he hoped to go about a little and make some of the interesting historical pilgrimages in the environs of Paris.

He made a point of this writing his fiancée every

detail of his plans, as well as all the small happenings of his monotonous and laborious life; and so, quite naturally, he described to her the beginning of his acquaintance with Agatha Midland.

“I’d spotted her for English,” he wrote, “long before I happened to see her name on a notebook. Don’t it sound like a made-up name out of an English novel? And that is the way she looks, too. I understand now why no American girl is ever called Agatha. To fit it you have to look sort of droopy all over, as if things weren’t going to suit you, but you couldn’t do anything to help it, and did not, from sad experience, have any rosy hopes that somebody would come along to fix things right. I’m not surprised that when English women do get stirred up over anything—for instance, like voting, nowadays—they fight like tiger-cats. If this Agatha-person is a fair specimen, they don’t look as though they were used to getting what they want any other way. But here I go, like every other fool traveler, making generalizations about a whole nation from seeing one specimen. On the other side of me from Miss Midland usually sits an old German, grubbing away at Sanskrit roots. The other day we got into talk in the little lunchroom here in the same building with the library, where all we readers go to feed, and he made me so mad I couldn’t digest my bread and milk. Once, just once, when he was real young, he met an American woman student—a regular P. G. freak, I gather—and nothing will convince him that all American girls aren’t like her. ‘May God forgive Christopher Columbus!’ he groans whenever he thinks of her. . . .”



There was no more in this letter about his English neighbor, but in the next, written a week later, he said :

“ We’ve struck up an acquaintance, the discouraged-looking English girl and I, and she isn’t so frozen-up as she seems. This is how it happened. I told you about the little lunchroom where the readers from the library get their noonday feed. Well, a day or so ago I was sitting at the next table to her, and when she’d finished eating and felt for her purse, I saw her get pale, and I knew right off she’d lost her money. ‘ If you’ll excuse *me*, Miss Midland,’ I said, ‘ I’ll be glad to loan you a little. My name is Harrison, Peter Harrison, and I usually sit next you in the reading-room.’ Say, Maggie, you don’t know how queerly she looked at me. I can’t tell you what her expression was like, for I couldn’t make head or tail out of it. It was like looking at a Hebrew book that you don’t know whether to read backward or forward. She got whiter, and drew away and said something about ‘ No ! No ! she couldn’t think. . . .’ But there stood the waiter with his hand out. I couldn’t stop to figure out if she was mad or scared. I said, ‘ Look-y-here, Miss Midland, I’m an American—here’s my card—I just want to help you out, that’s all. You needn’t be afraid I’ll bother you any.’ And with that I asked the waiter how much it was, paid him, and went out for my usual half-hour constitutional in the little park opposite the library.

“ When I went back to the reading-room, she was there in the seat next me, all right, but my, wasn’t she buried in a big folio ! She’s studying in some kind of old music-books. You would have laughed to see how she

didn't know I existed. I forgot all about her till closing-up time, but when I got out in the court a little ahead of her, I found it was raining and blowing to beat the cars, and I went back to hunt her up, I being the only person that knew she was broke. There she was, moping around in the vestibule under one of those awful pancake hats English women wear. I took out six cents—it costs that to ride in the omnibuses here—and I marched up to her. 'Miss Midland,' I said, 'excuse me again, but the weather is something terrible. You can't refuse to let me loan you enough to get home in a 'bus, for you would certainly catch your death of cold, not to speak of spoiling your clothes, if you tried to walk in this storm.'

"She looked at me queerly again, drew in her chin, and said very fierce, 'No, certainly not! Some one always comes to fetch me away.'

"Of course I didn't believe a word of *that*! It was just a bluff to keep from seeming to need anything. So I smiled at her and said, 'That's all right, but suppose something happens this evening so he doesn't get here. I guess you'd better take the six sous. . . . they won't hurt you any.' And I took hold of her hand, put the coppers in it, shut her fingers, took off my hat, and skipped out before she could get her breath. There are a *few* times when women are so contrary you can't do the right thing by them without bossing them around a little.

"Well, I thought sure if she'd been mad at noon she'd just be hopping mad over that last, but the next morning she came up to me in the vestibule and smiled at me, the funniest little wavery smile, as though she were trying on a brand-new expression. It made her look almost

pretty. 'Good morning, Mr. Harrison,' she said in that soft, singsong tone English women have, 'here is your loan back again. I hope I have the sum you paid for my lunch correct . . . and thank you very much.'

"I hated to take her little money, for her clothes are awfully plain and don't look as though she had any too much cash, but of course I did, and even told her that I'd given the waiter a three-cent tip she'd forgotten to figure in. When you *can*, I think it's only the square thing to treat women like human beings with sense, and I knew how I'd feel about being sure I'd returned all of a loan from a stranger. 'Oh, thank you for telling me,' she said, and took three more coppers out of her little purse; and by gracious! we walked into the reading-room as friendly as could be.

"That was last Wednesday, and twice since then we've happened to take lunch at the same table, and have had a regular visit. It tickles me to see how scared she is yet of the idea that she's actually talking to a real man that hasn't been introduced to her, but I find her awfully interesting, she's so different."

### III

During the week that followed this letter, matters progressed rapidly. The two Anglo-Saxons took lunch together every day, and by Friday the relations between them were such that, as they pushed back their chairs, Harrison said: "Excuse me, Miss Midland, for seeming to dictate to you *all* the time, but why in the world don't you go out after lunch and take a

half-hour's walk as I do? It'd be a lot better for your health."

The English girl looked at him with the expression for which he had as yet found no word more adequately descriptive than his vague "queer." "I haven't exactly the habit of walking about Paris streets alone, you know," she said.

"Oh, yes, to be sure," returned the American. "I remember hearing that young ladies can't do that here the way they do back home. But that's easily fixed. You won't be out in the streets, and you won't be alone, if you come out with me in the little park opposite. Come on! It's the first spring day."

Miss Midland dropped her arms with a gesture of helpless wonder. "Well, *really!*" she explained. "*Do* you think that so much better!" But she rose and prepared to follow him, as if her protest could not stand before the kindly earnestness of his manner. "There!" he said, after he had guided her across the street into the tiny green square where, in the sudden spring warmth, the chestnut buds were already swollen and showing lines of green. "To answer your question, I think it not only better, but absolutely all right—O.K.!"

They were sitting on a bench at one side of the fountain, whose tinkling splash filled the momentary silence before she answered, "I can't make it all out—" she smiled at him—"but I think you are right in

saying that it is all O. K." He laughed, and stretched out his long legs comfortably. "You've got the idea. That's the way to get the good of traveling and seeing other kinds of folks. You learn my queer slang words, and I'll learn yours."

Miss Midland stared again, and she cried out, "*My* queer slang words! What can you mean?"

He rattled off a glib list: "Why, 'just fancy now,' and 'only think of that!' and 'I dare say, indeed,' and a lot more."

"But *they* are not queer!" she exclaimed.

"They sound just as queer to me as 'O. K.' and 'I guess' do to you!" he said triumphantly.

She blinked her eyes rapidly, as though taking in an inconceivable idea, while he held her fixed with a steady gaze which lost none of its firmness by being both good-humored and highly amused. Finally, reluctantly, she admitted, "Yes, I see. You mean I'm insular."

"Oh, as to that, I mean we both are—that is, we are as ignorant as stotin'-bottles of each other's ways of doing things. Only *I* want to find out about your ways, and you don't about——"

She broke in hastily, "Ah, but I do want to find out about yours! You—you make me very curious indeed." As she said this, she looked full at him with a grave simplicity which was instantly reflected on his own face.

"Well, Miss Midland," he said slowly, "maybe now's a good time to say it, and maybe it's a good thing to say, since you *don't* know about our ways . . . to give you a sort of declaration of principles. I wasn't brought up in very polite society—my father and mother were Iowa farmer-folks, and I lost them early, and I've had to look out for myself ever since I was fourteen, so I'm not very long on *polish*; but let me tell you, as they say about other awkward people, I *mean* well. We're both poor students working together in a foreign country, and maybe I can do something to make it pleasanter for you, as I would for a fellow-student woman in my country. If I can, I'd like to, fine! I want to do what's square by everybody, and by women specially. I don't think they get a fair deal mostly. I think they've got as much sense as men, and lots of them more, and I like to treat them accordingly. So don't you mind if I do some Rube things that seem queer to you, and do remember that you can be dead sure that I *never* mean any harm."

He finished this speech with an urgent sincerity in his voice, quite different from his usual whimsical note, and for a moment they looked at each other almost solemnly, the girl's lips parted, her blue eyes wide and serious. She flushed a clear rose-pink. "Why!" she said, "why, I *believe* you!" Harrison broke the tension with a laugh. "And what is there so surprising if you do?"

"I don't think," she said slowly, "that I ever saw any one before whom I would believe if he said that last."

"Dear me!" cried Harrison, gaily, getting to his feet. "You'll make me think you are a hardened cynic. Well, if you believe me, *that's* all right! And now, come on, let's walk a little, and you tell me why English people treat their girls so differently from their boys. You are a perfect gold mine of information to me, do you know it?"

"But I've always taken for granted most of the things you find so queer about our ways. . . . I thought that was the way they were, don't you see, by the nature of things."

"*Aha!*" he said triumphantly. "You see another good of traveling! It stirs a person up. If you can give me a lot of new facts, maybe I can pay you back by giving you some new ideas."

"I think," said Miss Midland, with a soft energy, "I think you can, indeed."

#### IV

A week after this was the first of April, and when Harrison, as was his wont, reached the reading-room a little before the opening hour, he found a notice on the door to the effect that the fall of some plastering from a ceiling necessitated the closing of the reading



room for that day. A week of daily lunches and talks with Miss Midland had given him the habit of communicating his ideas to her, and he waited inside the vestibule for her to appear. He happened thus, as he had not before, to see her arrival. Accompanied by an elderly person in black, who looked, even to Harrison's inexperienced eyes, like a maid-servant, she came rapidly in through the archway which led from the street to the court. Here, halting a moment, she dismissed her attendant with a gesture, and, quite unconscious of the young man's gaze upon her, crossed the court diagonally with a free, graceful step. Observing her thus at his leisure, Harrison was moved to the first and almost the last personal comment upon his new friend. He did not as a rule notice very keenly the outward aspect of his associates. "Well, by gracious," he said to himself, "if she's not quite a good-looker!—or would be if she had money or gumption enough to put on a little more style!"

He took a sudden resolution and, meeting her at the foot of the steps, laid his plan enthusiastically before her. It took her breath away. "Oh, no, I *couldn't*" she exclaimed, looking about her helplessly as if foreseeing already that she would yield. "What would people——?"

"Nobody would say a thing, because nobody would know about it. We could go and get back here by the usual closing time, so that whoever comes for you

would never suspect—she's not very sharp, is she?"

"No, no. She's only what you would call my hired girl."

"Well, then, it's Versailles for us. Here, give me your portfolio to carry. Let's go by the tram line—it's cheaper for two poor folks."

On the way out he proposed, with the same thrifty motive, that they buy provisions in the town, before they began their sight-seeing in the château, and eat a picnic lunch somewhere in the park.

"Oh, anything you please now!" she answered with reckless light-heartedness. "I'm quite lost already."

"There's nothing disreputable about eating sandwiches on the grass," he assured her; and indeed, when they spread their simple provisions out under the great pines back of the Trianon, she seemed to agree with him, eating with a hearty appetite, laughing at all his jokes, and, with a fresh color and sparkling eyes, telling him that she had never enjoyed a meal more.

"Good for you! That's because you work too hard at your old history of music."—By this time each knew all the details of the other's research.—"You ought to have somebody right at hand to make you take vacations and have a good time once in a while. You're too conscientious."

Then, because he was quite frank and unconscious himself, he went on with a simplicity which the most

accomplished actor could not have counterfeited, "That's what I'm always telling Maggie—Miss Warner. She's the girl I'm engaged to."

He did not at the time remark, but afterward, in another land, he was to recall with startling vividness the quick flash of her clear eyes upon him and the fluttering droop of her eyelids. She finished her éclair quietly, remarking, "So you are engaged?"

"Very much so," answered Harrison, leaning his back against the pine-tree and closing his eyes, more completely to savor the faint fragrance of new life which rose about them in the warm spring air, like unseen incense.

Miss Midland stood up, shaking the crumbs from her skirt, and began fitting her gloves delicately upon her slim and very white hands. After a pause, "But how would she like *this*?" she asked.

Without opening his eyes, Harrison murmured, "She'd like it fine. She's a great girl for outdoors."

His companion glanced down at him sharply, but in his tranquil and half-somnolent face there was no trace of evasiveness. "I don't mean the park, the spring weather," she went on, with a persistence which evidently cost her an effort. "I mean your being here with another girl. That would make an English woman jealous."

Harrison opened his dark eyes wide and looked at her in surprise. "You don't understand . . . we're

not flirting with each other, Maggie and I . . . we're engaged." He added with an air of proffering a self-evident explanation, "As good as married, you know."

Miss Midland seemed to find in the statement a great deal of material for meditation, for after an "Ah!" which might mean anything, she sat down on the other side of the tree, leaning her blonde head against its trunk and staring up into the thick green branches. Somewhere near them in an early-flowering yellow shrub a bee droned softly. After a time she remarked as if to herself, "They must take marriage very seriously in Iowa."

The young man aroused himself, to answer sleepily: "It's Illinois where I live now—Iowa was where I grew up—but it's all the same. Yes, we do."

After that there was another long, fragrant silence which lasted until Harrison roused himself with a sigh, exclaiming that although he would like nothing better than to sit right there till he took root, they had yet to "do" the two Trianons and to see the state carriages. During this sightseeing tour he repeated his performance of the morning in the château, pouring out a flood of familiar, quaintly expressed historical lore of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which made his astonished listener declare he must have lived at that time.

"Nope!" he answered her. "Got it all out of Illinois libraries. Books are great things if you're only

willing to treat them right. And history—by gracious! history is a study fit for the gods! All about folks, and they are all that are worth while in the world!”

They were standing before the Grand Trianon as he said this, waiting for the tram car, and as it came into sight he cried out artlessly, his dark, aquiline face glowing with fervor, “I—I just *love* folks!”

She looked at him curiously. “In all my life I never knew any one before to say or think that.” Some of his enthusiasm was reflected upon her own fine, thoughtful face as a sort of wistfulness when she added, “It must make you very happy. I wish I could feel so.”

“You don’t look at them right,” he protested.

She shook her head. “No, we haven’t known the same kind. I had never even heard of the sort of people you seem to have known.”

The tram car came noisily up to them, and no more was said.

## V

A notice posted the following day to the effect that for some time the reading-room would be closed one day in the week for repairs, gave Harrison an excuse for insisting on weekly repetitions of what he called their historical picnics.

Miss Midland let herself be urged into these with a

half-fearful pleasure which struck the young American as pathetic. "Anybody can see she's had mighty few good times in *her* life," he told himself. They "did" Fontainebleau, Pierrefonds, Vincennes, and Chantilly—this last expedition coming in the first week of May, ten days before Miss Midland was to leave Paris. They were again favored by wonderfully fine spring weather, so warm that the girl appeared in a light-colored cotton gown and a straw hat which, as her friend told her, with the familiarity born of a month of almost uninterrupted common life, made her look "for all the world like a picture."

After their usual conscientious and minute examination of the objects of historical interest, they betook themselves with their lunch-basket to a quiet corner of the park, by a clear little stream, on the other side of which a pair of white swans were building a nest. It was very still, and what faint breeze there was barely stirred the trees. The English girl took off her hat, and the sunlight on her blonde hair added another glory to the spring day.

They ate their lunch with few words, and afterward sat in what seemed to the American the most comfortable and companionable of silences, idly watching a peacock unfold the flashing splendor of his plumage before the old gray fountain. "My! My! My!" he murmured finally. "Isn't the world about the best place!"

The girl did not answer, and, glancing at her, he was startled to see that her lips were quivering. "Why, Miss Midland!" he cried anxiously. "Have you had bad news?"

She shook her head. "Nothing new."

"What's the matter?" he asked, coming around in front of her. "Perhaps I can help you even if it's only to give some good advice."

She looked up at him with a sudden flash. "I suppose that, since you are so much engaged, you think you would make a good father-confessor!"

"I don't see that that has anything to do with it," he said, sitting down beside her, "but you can bank on me for doing anything I can."

"You don't see that that has anything to do with it," she broke in sharply, with the evident intention of wounding him, "because you are very unworldly, what is usually called very unsophisticated."

If she had thought to pique him with this adjective, she was disarmed by the heartiness of his admission, "As green as grass! But I'd like to help you all the same, if I can."

"You don't care if you are?" she asked curiously.

"Lord no! What does it matter?"

"You may care then to know," she went on, still probing at him, "that your not caring is the principal reason for my . . . finding you interesting . . . for my liking you . . . as I do."



"Well, I'm interested to know that," he said reasonably, "but blessed if I can see why. What difference does it make to *you*?"

"It's a great surprise to me," she said clearly, "I never met anybody before who didn't care more about being sophisticated than about anything else. To have you not even think of that . . . to have you think of nothing but your work and how to 'mean well' as you say . . ." she stopped, flushing deeply.

"Yes, it must be quite a change," he admitted, sobered by her tone, but evidently vague as to her meaning, "Well, I'm very glad you don't mind my being as green as grass and as dense as a hitching-block. It's very lucky for me."

A quick bitterness sprang into her voice. "I don't see," she echoed his phrase, "what difference it makes to *you*!"

"Don't you?" he said, lighting a cigarette and not troubling himself to discuss the question with her. She was evidently all on edge with nerves, he thought, and needed to be calmed down. He pitied women for their nerves, and was always kindly tolerant of the resultant petulances.

She frowned and said with a tremulous resentment, as if gathering herself together for a long-premeditated attempt at self-defense. "You're not only as green as grass, but you perceive nothing . . . any European,

even the stupidest would perceive what you . . . but you are as primitive as a Sioux Indian, you have the silly morals of a non-conformist preacher, . . . you're as brutal as . . ."

He opposed to this outburst the impregnable wall of a calm and meditative silence. She looked angrily into his quiet eyes, which met hers with unflinching kindness. The contrast between their faces was striking . . . was painful.

She said furiously, "There is nothing to you except that you are stronger than I, and you know it . . . and that *is* brutal!" She paused a long moment, quivering, and then relapsed into spent, defeated lassitude, . . . "and I like it," she added under her breath, looking down at her hands miserably.

"I don't mean to be brutal," he said peaceably. "I'm sorry if I am."

"Oh, it's no matter!" she said impatiently.

"All right, have it your own way," he agreed, good-naturedly, shifting into a more comfortable position, and resuming his patient silence. He might have been a slightly pre-occupied but indulgent parent, waiting for a naughty child to emerge from a tantrum.

After a while, "Well, then," she began as though nothing had passed between them since his offer to give her advice, "well then, if you want to be father-confessor, tell me what you'd do in my place, if your family expected you as a matter of course to—to—"

"What do they want you to do?" he asked as she hesitated.

"Oh, nothing that they consider at all formidable! Only what every girl should do—make a good and suitable marriage, and bring up children to go on doing what she had found no joy in."

"Don't you do it!" he said quietly. "Nobody believes more than I do in marrying the right person. But just marrying so's to *be* married—that's Tophet! Red-hot Tophet!"

"But what else is there for me to do?" she said, turning her eyes to him with a desperate hope in his answer. "Tell me! My parents have brought me up so that there is nothing I can fill my life with, if—I think, on the whole, I will be more miserable if I don't than if I—"

"Why, look-y-here!" he said earnestly. "You're not a child, you're a grown woman. You have your music. You could earn your living by that. Great Scott! Earn your living scrubbing floors before you—"

She put her handkerchief to her eyes. "Ah, but I am so alone against all my world! Now, here, with you, it seems easy but—without any one to sustain me, to—"

Harrison went on: "Now let me give you a rule I believe in as I do in the sun's rising. Never marry a man just because you think you could manage to

live with him. Don't do it unless you are dead sure you couldn't live without him!"

She took down her handkerchief, showing a white face, whose expression matched the quaver in her voice, as she said breathlessly: "But how if I meet a man and feel I cannot live without him, and he is already—" she brought it out squarely in the sunny peace,—“if he is already as good as married!"

He took it with the most single-hearted simplicity. "Now it's you who are unsophisticated and getting your ideas from fool novels. Things don't happen that way in real life. Either the man keeps his marriage a secret, in which case he is a sneak and not worth a second thought from any decent woman, or else, if she had known all along that he was married, she doesn't get to liking him that way. Don't you see?"

She looked away, down the stream for a moment with inscrutable eyes, and then broke into an unexpected laugh, rising at the same time and putting on her hat. "I see, yes, I see," she said. "It is as you say, quite simple. And now let us go to visit the rest of the park."

## VI

The next excursion was to be their last, and Miss Midland had suggested a return to Versailles to see

the park in its spring glory. They lunched in a little inclosure, rosy with the pink and white magnolia blossoms, where the uncut grass was already ankle-deep and the rose-bushes almost hid the gray stone wall with the feathery abundance of their first pale green leaves. From a remark of the girl's that perhaps this was the very spot where Marie Antoinette had once gathered about her her gay court of pseudo-milkmaids, they fell into a discussion of that queen's pretty pastoral fancy. Harrison showed an unexpected sympathy with the futile, tragic little merry-maker.

"I expect she got sick and tired of being treated like a rich, great lady, and wanted to see what it would feel like to be a human being. The king is always disguising himself as a goat-herd to make sure he can be loved for his own sake."

"But those stories are all so monotonous!" she said impatiently. "The king always is made to find out that the shepherdess does love him for his own sake. What would happen if she wouldn't look at him?"

Harrison laughed, "Well, by George, I never thought of that. I should say if he cared enough about her to want his own way, he'd better get off his high-horse and say, 'Look-y-here, I'm not the common ordinary mutt I look. I'm the king in disguise. *Now* will you have me?'"

Miss Midland looked at him hard. "Do you think it likely the girl would have him then?"

"Don't you?" he said, still laughing, and tucking away the last of a foie-gras sandwich.

She turned away, frowning. "I don't see how you can call *me* cynical!"

He raised his eyebrows, "That's not cynical," he protested. "You have to take folks the way they are, and not the way you think it would be pretty to have them. It mightn't be the most dignified position for the king, but I never did see the use of dignity that got in the way of your having what you wanted."

She looked at him with so long and steady a gaze that only her patent absence of mind kept it from being a stare. Then, "I think I will go for a walk by myself," she said.

"Sure, if you want to," he assented, "and I'll take a nap under this magnolia tree. I've been working late nights, lately."

When she came back after an hour, the little inclosure was quite still, and, walking over to the magnolia, she saw that the young man had indeed fallen soundly asleep, one arm under his head, the other flung wide, half buried in the grass. For a long time she looked down gravely at the powerful body, at the large, sinewy hand, relaxed like a sleeping child's, at the eagle-like face, touchingly softened by its profound unconsciousness.

Suddenly the dark eyes opened wide into hers. The young man gave an exclamation and sat up, startled. At this movement she looked away, smoothing a fold of her skirt. He stared about him, still half-asleep. "Did I hear somebody call?" he asked. "I must have had a very vivid dream of some sort—I thought somebody was calling desperately to me. You didn't speak, did you?"

"No," she answered softly, "I said nothing."

"Well, I hope you'll excuse me for being such poor company. I only meant to take a cat-nap. I hope we won't be too late for the train."

He scrambled to his feet, his eyes still heavy with sleep and pulled out his watch. As he did this, Miss Midland began to speak very rapidly. What she said was so astonishing to him that he forgot to put back his watch, forgot even to look at it, and stood with it in his hand, staring at her, with an expression as near to stupefaction as his keen and powerful face could show.

When she finally stopped to draw breath, the painful breath of a person who has been under water too long, he broke into baroque ejaculations, "Well, wouldn't that *get* you! Wouldn't that absolutely freeze you to a pillar of salt! Well, of all the darndest idiots, I've been the—" With Miss Midland's eyes fixed on him, he broke into peal after peal of his new-world laughter, his fresh, crude, raw, inimitably vital laughter, "I'm



thinking of the time I loaned you the franc and a half for your lunch, and hated to take it back because I thought you needed it—and you rich enough to buy ten libraries to Andy's one! Say, how *did* you keep your face straight!"

Miss Midland apparently found no more difficulty in keeping a straight face now than then. She did not at all share his mirth. She was still looking at him with a strained gaze as though she saw him with difficulty, through a mist increasingly smothering. Finally, as though the fog had grown quite too thick, she dropped her eyes, and very passive, waited for his laughter to stop.

When it did, and the trees which had looked down on Marie Antoinette had ceased echoing to the loud, metallic, and vigorous sound, he noticed his watch still in his hand. He glanced at it automatically, thrust it back into his pocket and exclaimed, quite serious again. "Look-y-here. We'll have to step lively if we are going to catch that train back to Paris, Miss Midland—Lady Midland, I mean,—Your highness—what *do* they call the daughter of an Earl? I never met a real live member of the aristocracy before."

She moved beside him as he strode off towards the gate. "I am usually called Lady Agatha," she answered, in a flat tone.

"How pretty that sounds!" he said heartily, "Lady Agatha! Lady Agatha!" Why don't we have some

such custom in America?" He tried it tentatively. "Lady Marietta—that's my mother's name—don't seem to fit altogether does it? Lady Maggie—Oh, Lord! awful! No, I guess we'd better stick to Miss and Mrs. But it *does* fit Agatha fine!"

She made no rejoinder. She looked very tired and rather stern.

After they were on the train she said she had a headache and preferred not to talk, and ensconcing herself in a corner of the compartment, closed her eyes. Harrison, refreshed by the outdoor air and his nap, opened his note-book and began puzzling over a knotty point in one of the French Royal Grants to LaSalle which he was engaged at the time in deciphering. Once he glanced up to find his companion's eyes open and fixed on him. He thought to himself that her headache must be pretty bad, and stirred himself to say with his warm, friendly accent, "It's a perfect shame you feel so miserable! Don't you want me to open the window? Wouldn't you like my coat rolled up for a pillow? Isn't there something I can do for you?"

She looked at him, and closing her lips, shook her head.

Later, in the midst of a struggle over an archaic law-form, the recollection of his loan to his fellow-student darted into his head. He laid down his note-book to laugh again. She turned her head and looked

a silent question. "Oh, it's just that franc and a half!" he explained. "I'll never get over that as long as I live!"

She pulled down her veil and turned away from him again.

When they reached Paris, he insisted that she take a carriage and go home directly. "I'll go on to the reading-room and explain to your hired girl that you were sick and couldn't wait for her." Before he closed her into the cab he added, "But, look here! I won't see you again, will I? I forgot you are going back to England to-morrow. Well, to think of this being good-by! I declare, I hate to say it!" He held out his hand and took her cold fingers in his. "Well, Miss Midland, I tell *you* there's not a person in the world who can wish you better luck than I do. You've been awfully good to me, and I appreciate it, and I do hope that if there's ever any little thing I can do for you, you'll let me know. I surely am yours to command."

The girl's capacity for emotion seemed to be quite exhausted, for she answered nothing to this quaint valedictory beyond a faint, "Good-by, Mr. Harrison, I hope you . . ." but she did not finish the sentence.

## THERE WAS A MOON, THERE WAS A STAR

There was a moon, there was a star,  
There was a path, a wood;  
A silent voice, a voiceless word,  
Well heard and understood:

The years crowd on, the sundering years,  
The full years fleet too soon,  
Yet leave that soundless word unhushed,  
And that unwaning moon.

## THE GREAT REFUSAL

I WAS a Senior in college, and very much more worldly-wise and sure of myself than I have ever been since. My room-mate and I were spending the holidays with Molly Beeman, at her country house, and it was before the fire in the library there, that I heard the story . . .

I had met Lawrence in the village, ten days before, and was already fighting hard against my feeling for him, against the shock of our wonderful first meeting of eyes, against the revelations of our later talks. I was well seconded in this battle by the outspoken, laughing scorn of my two friends for his uncouthness. "Dolly's made a conquest, even off up here in the bushes . . . she's added a new one to her unrivalled freak-collection," they announced mockingly to a caller, a correct, aquiline, white-pompadoured woman, plainly dressed in broadcloth, with a magnificent set of sables. She had been introduced to us as somebody's aunt, much interested in social service, with a committee meeting for every day in the week. As the maid helped her off with her furs, Molly had told us under her breath that she was worth millions, and then some. She had stopped in rather late, had missed

the older people of the family, and now sat alone with us in the big, darkening room, before the fire.

She sipped her tea absently, paying to the chattering college-girls the small amount of attention which was all they expected from so distinguished and wealthy a woman, and more than they asked from an uninteresting philanthropist with white hair. She was too great a personage, entirely to neglect, however, and they went through a pretense of explaining their talk to her before they went on with it. "You know Lawrence Carson, the jay country-boy with the big ears, who worked his way through college waiting on table? It's always been such a joke in the village, how he'd never look at a girl . . . not that they'd look at him, either! Well, he met Dolly here, at the village Christmas tree party . . . of course the hay-seeds just *have* to be invited to that . . . and she knocked him sky-high! He made no bones of it, either! It's too killing to see him! He's actually put on that absurd suit of black clothes and come to *call* on her, three times . . . just like anybody, if you please! You ought to see him wipe his boots on the door-mat. And he says, "ma'am" to Mother, just the way they do in rube books."

It was so inconceivable to them that he was anything but a butt and laughing-stock to me, that for the instant it became inconceivable to me. I was cowering with a mean, silly satisfaction behind their blindness. The

idiotic cowardliness of conforming youth lay on me like a paralysis. I joined uneasily in their laughter, shutting out from my ears the vibrations of that voice which now means heaven and earth, and all life to me.

At the sound of my laughter, the old club-woman stirred herself and looked across at me keenly. I have only to close my eyes to see that look again. Before it, I fell silent, fingering my cup uneasily. She said, "I thought Lawrence Carson was the one who did so remarkably well in biology. Hasn't he a fellowship to go on with his studies?"

They glanced across at her, somewhat surprised at her entering the conversation. "Has he?" they said indifferently, and turned to each other with, "Oh, Molly, *did* you see his socks!" and "I trust your health is good, ma'am!" I tried to join in the laughter which followed on this mimicry. My voice sounded strange in my own ears. I was horribly afraid of being found out. I was sick with cowardice.

As I look back now, I see how perilously poised I was, how fatally inclined towards ignoble, life-long descent . . .

The fragrance of all the blessed hours of my blessed life goes up as incense before the recollection of that woman whom I saw but for that hour . . .

"Let me tell you a story," she said abruptly, not addressing herself to any of us. In the ensuing, sur-



prised silence, she set her cup down on the table, the click of the porcelain loud in the darkened room. She looked across at us, her aquiline old face dimly lighted by the embers at her feet. "I have never told it before to anybody," she said, and with no more preliminary, began, "It happened when I was nineteen years old, and that is a long time ago.

"I was going from Paris to London with my maid and a sister from the English convent where I'd been educated, and it was at Dieppe that it occurred. In those days Dieppe was a miserable little fishing village far from the wharf and big warehouses, where the English Channel boats came in, so that we had to hire a cab to drive us the two or three miles over the deserted countryside. When we arrived at the wharf we found only the long, stone platform with a few blackened timbers lying at one side. The cabman explained that a recent fire had destroyed all the warehouses, and pointed to a tiny, kennel-like shed as the temporary office. No one was in it—indeed there was no one in sight at all but a solitary young Frenchman, who walked up and down looking impatiently out to sea as though he expected the boat to arrive at any moment. The cabman, our only source of information, told us the boat was due at about six o'clock, and would leave at midnight for England. As it was then halfpast five, there seemed no great hardship in waiting even in so exposed a place, for it was a deliciously

warm and still summer afternoon, with the sun still quite high above the horizon, pouring long beams upon the tranquil countryside. So the obliging driver settled us and our bags and our wraps, touched his hat and, whistling a gay little tune, rattled off down the dusty white road.

“As the sound of his wheels died away in the distance a profound silence settled about us. With him seemed to go all the trivial and usual noises of the world. For the moment we seemed cut off and isolated in this glowing and tranquil place, with the featureless calm of the plain on one side of us and the quiet of the sea on the other.

“The young Frenchman had stopped his sentinel-like paces and stood quite still, looking down at the water, whose soft lapping was the only sound to be heard. Plump Sister Ruth and Pollie were propped in the midst of the baggage, Sister Ruth’s tired eyes already drooping with the fatigue of the tiresome journey. I stood looking idly about at the long stretch of green, rolling downs back of us; at the opalescent heaving of the channel scarcely sparkling in all that flood of sunshine, so still it lay; at the quiet, deep-blue sky, and finally at the meditative profile of the young man outlined against the reflected glory of the water. I suppose he was not what would be called handsome, but even as I looked at him in the listless indifference of a fellow traveler I felt oddly drawn

to him. It was not that I noticed his slender, strong figure or the rich, dark coloring that seemed to show a southern origin. I was attracted by an indescribable air of purity and nobility which shone from his eyes, and I observed that the hand with which he stroked the flowing, black beard was at once fine and very strong. I wondered idly if this was his first trip to England, and how the English manners would affect him—this was in mid-Victorian times, remember.

“And then, as though realizing that he was the subject of thought, he turned and looked at me. I was startled beyond words, for instead of the opaque and glassy regard of a stranger, I found myself facing the most real and personal revelation of an individuality. His eyes had the joyfully expectant look of one who turns in answer to a call from a well-known voice. He looked at me as though he had been waiting all his life to see me and had instantly recognized and welcomed me. For a moment I thought he must have mistaken me for a friend, but I realized that he had not stirred or spoken, had only looked at me out of his eyes. And then I knew that we were standing staring at each other like two children and turned back to Sister Ruth. She was complaining of drowsiness and was wishing for a chair in which she could lean back for a nap. I looked about helplessly, when the young Frenchman stepped toward his satchel and extracted from it a folding-chair and traveling rug, which he offered to us,

saying, in French: 'If you will allow me.' Sister Ruth thanked him, and as she seated her bulky body she added, in English: 'Very inconvenient here, isn't it?'

"The young man looked bewildered, and I said, in French: 'Perhaps you don't speak English?'

"'No, mademoiselle, but I noticed that the good sister looked tired.'

"I thanked him again, and there was a moment's silence. Then he said: 'I suppose the boat will be here any moment. Isn't that it now?'

"We both walked to the end of the pier and stood looking off to sea where there was indeed a tiny speck visible. 'The sea is like a great, fireless opal, all milky and radiant,' I said, and was again conscious of the curious, intimate gaze he turned on me. He took off his hat and touched the tips of his brown fingers to one side of his curly hair, cut *en brosse*. It was a gesture I came to know and one I cannot see to-day without a little start.

"'The fire will come into your jeweled sea when the sun sinks lower,' he said in an odd, charming voice, with little unexpected turns in it. As he spoke a long, red beam flashed across the water. 'That means the end of the day,' I said in the hushed tones the stillness imposed on us. He made no answer and we both stood quite still for a long, long time, watching the prodigious sight that a sunset over the sea always is. It was

like being present at a great and memorable event, so slowly and imposingly did the waves swallow up the flaming disk. When the last fiery gleam was quenched, a quick coolness fell about us and, partly from the cold and partly from an undefined feeling of gray doubt, I drew a long breath, almost a sigh, and shivered. My companion turned toward me and said seriously, as if in answer to my last remark: 'If it means the end of that day, it means also the beginning of a new one, and that may always be the beginning of a new life.'

"I gave another little shiver as I thought of the pleasant, empty years that had filled my life up to that time and of their probable continuance in just such emptiness. Sister Ruth called sleepily to me: 'Margaret, aren't you cold? Wouldn't you better put your wrap on?' Little black Pollie came toward me, holding it out, and as she helped me on with it she said complainingly: 'Miss Mahgret, doan' yo' think it's gettin' powerful late? Ain't it most time dat boat was heah? Yo' watch done stop and I doan' know what time 'tis! Ask dat foreign gemman, why doan' you?' I did so, and was informed that it was nearly seven o'clock. Pollie went on; 'Say, Miss Mahgret, why kyan't we eat that lunch we brought now? I'm powerful hongry, and there ain't no tellin' when de boat 'll be here.'

"Upon my consenting, her nimble, black fingers

soon had the lunch arranged on a fallen stone pillar, and Sister Ruth and I were sitting, with a sandwich and a glass of wine, exchanging comments on the lateness of the boat. The young man of the sunset had withdrawn as far as possible to the other end of the wharf and stood with his back to us. Sister Ruth was seized with hospitable compunctions and asked me if I didn't think it would be pleasant to invite the polite young gentleman who had given her the chair to share our meal. I stood up and called him by the only name I ever knew. 'Monsieur,' I said, and then waiting till he had come, with a graceful eagerness that I found charming, I asked him to lunch with us. He took off his hat with a bow of thanks, and touching his hair with that quaint gesture, he seated himself beside the improvised table. 'A great good fortune to me—your kindness,' he said. 'I have not touched food since I left Paris in such haste I found no time for lunch. I was to be sure to meet the boat so as to get some plans for a fellow architect. One must indeed put himself out prodigiously to meet a boat so punctilious.' He laughed a little at his mild pleasantry, so contagiously that I felt a childlike bubble of mirth rise in my own throat and surprised myself by laughing outright in sheer light-heartedness. Sister Ruth asked what the joke was, and on hearing of our guest's cause for appetite, she began pressing food on him with a true English horror of fasting.

“ He ate heartily as we chatted of the journey and affairs in Paris, but finally looked at me whimsically as she continued urging him after we had all finished and Pollie was making her own satisfied meal not far from us. ‘ Please tell the holy sister that I am most grateful for her kindness, but even gratitude cannot make me care for more.’ ‘ Perhaps you smoke?’ I suggested, and with an eager ‘ Oh, if you allow me,’ he pulled out his pipe. There was domestic effect about our group, the white cloth glimmering in the twilight and the smoke from monsieur’s pipe going straight up in the still evening air.

“ A big star suddenly flashed out high above us, and looking up at it, I repeated the old superstition of my childhood :

“ ‘ Starlight, star bright,  
Very first star I’ve seen to-night,  
Wish I may, wish I might  
Have the wish I wish to-night.’

“ Monsieur looked curiously at me and asked if that was an American incantation. ‘ You look like a priestess chanting your evening devotions.’

“ I translated the nonsense laughingly into French, and was surprised by the seriousness with which our companion received it. ‘ Why, that is for me!’ he cried in his resonant voice. ‘ That is for me, this night of my life!’ And he said it over after me,



devoutly, with his soft, black eyes fixed on mine, so that I felt at once restless and strangely at ease.

“Sister Ruth was nodding again in her chair and we lowered our voices. He said the rhyme reminded him of an old one in French that used to be said in Champagne when he was a little boy, and I repeated it over after him, that and many other scraps of peasant verse which came into his head, amusing myself by trying to catch the slight accent of the patois in which he recited them. Sister Ruth now slept profoundly and Pollie had curled up by her side. I covered them over with his traveling-rug and rose to walk up and down to warm myself. Monsieur paced beside me and talked in hushed tones of the suave and smiling country at Champagne. It seemed very much like the green valleys of Connecticut, which I could remember from my childhood, and we compared early experiences.

“A wave of homesickness for my own country and a regret for the years spent in English schools came over me. I sought for intimate memories of nooks in the woods to match those of this lover of green fields. I amazed myself not only by the frankness with which I spoke of that early, precious time when my mother was still alive, and we were living at home in America, but by the depth of my love for it. In the dusky, shimmering twilight I felt strangely moved by undefined emotion. I found myself saying to this stranger,

to this foreigner of an alien tongue, things of which I had been scarcely conscious myself.

"The stars came out in quiet hundreds and shone down upon our pacing talk. There seemed nobody alive at all but ourselves. Sister Ruth and Pollie slept, and the Channel scarcely breathed under the brooding sky. We looked up at the stars and tried to say, as have all young souls, what their still, austere light meant to us. We talked of music, my art, of architecture, his own, and of painting, the one common to us both, and struggled for words to express the joy we found in them. I felt strangely serene, transported to a realm where my life was emptied of the trivial, the conventional, the deadening, which filled so large a space in it, and where the vital forces of my being, usually so cramped, expanded into a new strength and glory. Every breath I drew seemed charged with deep significance, as though now at last life had a meaning.

"Monsieur talked—my faith! he talked with the tongue of angels. Again and again he expressed in his smooth-flowing French some subtle shade of feeling I had not known was mine, but to which I instantly responded, quivering. Again and again we uttered that cry of astonished and joyous recognition: 'What, you, too, have felt that!' And then, all eagerness, I went still deeper, and spoke of the sacred things of my heart, unashamed under the white light of the stars. Once, about midnight, we went and sat down near

Sister Ruth, and were quiet for a long time. I felt dimly the strangeness of our talk—like a miracle in my closely sheltered, reserved, English life—but my head was whirling, and it seemed like a beautiful and bewildering dream.

“All at once monsieur started and pointed to the dunes back of us. A faint silver shimmer shone there, and in a moment the full moon rose into sight, ascending with a magnificent surge. The young man took off his hat and rose to his feet in an involuntary tribute to the stirring flood of light that now lay so suddenly white about us. It was almost like the far-off but silvery clear note of a bugle. Everything shone with a soft radiance. The sleeping Channel exhaled a sigh as though half stirred from rest by the glorious light.

“I looked at monsieur, no longer a shadowy and indistinct shape, formulating my inmost thoughts and answering them, a spirit, speaking with inspired divination out of a mysterious obscurity. Now he was a warm and living human being whom I felt near me with an inexpressible sense of security and pleasure. It was as though a great and lofty strain of music had changed in key and become vibrant with humanity.

“The young man looked at me and smiled, touching his hair with his usual gesture. I felt the little gust of unreasoning delight we have at the familiarity of a trivial action in one we love.

“We began again to walk up and down, only here was no mystery somewhat daunting, even though exquisitely sweet. Here was lovely human companionship, such as one dreams of and knows is unattainable—a frank and painless unfolding of one’s heart, sure of sympathy. Monsieur told me of his mother and of his plans to give her all she wished, if only he could realize in stone and mortar the dreams in his head. I spoke of the hateful burden of my wealth, of my meaningless and vacant life. I spoke of my solitude and listlessness in the busy world, and I loved what before I had hated, for it gave me his sympathy. I reveled in telling of the useless, lonely existence I led, surrounded as I was for the moment by his sure companionship. All that had gone before seemed far and faint, like an unreal thing, leagues away and years ago—the faded recollection of an unhappy hour.

“I knew vaguely, as time went on, that the night must be nearly gone and I half dreaded the coming of day, although so absorbed was I in the present that all thought of the future was as dim as consciousness of the past. Still I noted with a glad surprise that when the first faint streaks of dawn began to show and the moon paled, the cool light came like a grateful proof of the reality of the welcome fact. My spirits rose; it seemed to me I could never be unhappy again. We were chattering like children when the first clear beam of sunlight struck fully on monsieur’s face. I

looked at it in wonder, so great an exaltation, so lofty a delight shone in the strong, dark countenance. 'Madoiselle!' he cried, 'do you know what has happened since the sun went down? The world has turned completely around! Yes, the world has turned completely around!'

"I said nothing, but it is my joy and pride now to remember that I looked at him with my eyes unveiled for his gaze, with all that I was feeling shining in them. One generous moment, at least, I had.

"Then Sister Ruth woke up with a start, amazed to find herself there and stiff with the long cramped position. Monsieur and I went to help her, and made her walk up and down the pier between us. 'Saints above! Have we waited all the night in this exposed place?' she cried as soon as she realized where she was. 'Whatever has become of the boat?'

"'The boat?' I thought to myself blankly, and suddenly knew that I had forgotten about the boat.

"What does she say?' asked Monsieur.

"'She asks where is the boat?' I translated, and burst into peals of laughter to see reproduced on his face the momentary vacant look of my own. He laughed, too, with the joyous abandon of a child, and under the fresh light of that early sun we made merry as I never did before or since. All the world laughed around us, and a lark, springing up, sent down roulades of mirth to join with ours.

"Sister Ruth lost patience. 'What are you laughing at?' she said fretfully. 'Where is the boat?'

"It was Pollie who answered the question, pointing with a black forefinger to the horizon. 'Dah she is, Miss Mahgret. Well, to think of dat t'ing being late one plumb night!'

"Sure enough, the belated vessel came puffing her way towards us, and by the time we had the baggage arranged and strapped up she was slipping alongside the wharf, and the English friends who were to meet me were waving their hands and shouting unintelligible explanations of their delay to me.

"At the sight of their correctly dressed English blondness, all my years of conventional life came back to me with a rush, and the chains of tradition fell heavily about my limbs. I shook in terrified astonishment at my wild flight away from my usual bonds. My friends came running out on the dock, exclaiming over my hardships and surrounding Sister Ruth with solicitous attention. Monsieur stood afar off, with his eyes fixed on me expectantly. A word, a look, a thought would have brought him to my side, but I failed him and myself. I was confused, overborne; all the careful training, all the years of repression lay on me with a crushing weight. In a numb misery I felt myself moving toward the boat without looking toward the slender figure standing dark and silent in the sunlight.



“It was Sister Ruth who came puffing back to thank him for the chair and rug. ‘Come, Margaret, he was very polite,’ she called. As we started towards him he came at once to us, but very soberly, with hurt and surprised eyes. I half laugh now, even as I weep when I think how young we both were, fatally tongue-tied with the inexperience of youth. He said gravely: ‘No need for thanks. It is always a pleasure to do a service to a holy sister.’ And to me, hanging his head, he said with an adorable confusion: ‘Mademoiselle—I wish you—’ And then, as I said nothing to help him: ‘Adieu, mademoiselle.’ He raised his hat and turned away. With a heart like lead, I followed Sister Ruth into the cabin.

“The vessel put back immediately in an attempt to make up for the lost time, and in a few moments I felt the tossing of the waves. Then, indeed, something seemed to break within me and I rushed up on deck, a wild resolution in my heart. But it was too late. The gang-plank was up and already several feet of sparkling water lay between me and the shore. I felt desperate, like an animal trapped, and ran to the prow. This was near the pier, and not far from the group of recently disembarked passengers. Heedless of bystanders, I put my whole force into my voice: ‘Monsieur!’ I called, ‘Monsieur!’

“He sprang from the cluster of men and ran eagerly down the wharf. I could see his face all glowing with



emotion. The vessel was drifting away. But I hesitated, fettered and bound by convention. What could I do? What had I, after all, to say to him? I heard Sister Ruth's astonished voice calling me, and an inspiration struck me.

“ ‘Monsieur, *écoutez!* ’ I shouted. ‘Monsieur, *au revoir!* ’ I don't know if he heard me, for a gust of black smoke blew between us, and when it lifted he was only a dark spot on the shining, white pier.

“ If that had been the last time I saw him I might have found an excuse in my utter confusion and bewilderment, but I was given one more chance,—more than I deserved, I see now. During the months that intervened before I was in Paris again I lived over and over that experience, and I took up and pondered some of the wise things and noble he had said. He remained the living figure in my world. Every one else seemed faded and unreal. It was as though I had been living in the dark contentedly, not knowing what the sunlight meant, and then had had one day of warmth and brightness. When the first star came out all those summer evenings it went through my heart, and the rising of the moon—I cannot see it yet, withered old woman that I am, without a tightening of my throat.

“ I had plenty of time to think out what it all meant, and when in Paris, the next October, I saw him again, I had no one but myself to blame for the ending. It was the day before we sailed for America, and my eyes

were wandering all over Paris in the foolish and romantic idea of running into him on the street. I had the unreasoning feeling of the young that something must happen! And yet when, straying a moment from my party in the Louvre, I came upon him, looking at my favorite Ribera, I could only exclaim and blush. The months that had passed since the night at Dieppe vanished like smoke at the sight of his dark face. He turned, saw me, and came towards me with a sudden spring of delight that was echoed in my heart.

“‘Ah, mademoiselle, you smile!’ he cried. ‘Do you then allow me—may I—’ He glowed with hope. He stood close to me now, looking at me with soft, black eyes. The whole beauty and strength of the man shone visibly for me—for me who could only say, hesitatingly and miserably: ‘I am going to America to-morrow, monsieur.’

“The news dashed out the light in his face. ‘Yes, but before you go’—he looked at me imploringly—‘before you go, oh, mademoiselle, if you would but make one move! How dare I? You have your money, your friends,—I am so miserably poor—how do I know but that you think—*oh!* Only a word!’

“There was a pause. He was waiting for me. And I? The manners of my world hung about me like the lead mantles of Dante’s sinners. I knew in a vague, tumultuous way that a turning point had come, but with this woman’s intuition came a flood of foolish,

young-lady ideas, hideously futile and vain as I see them now. I was embarrassed—what could I do? I didn't even know his name. How could I introduce him to my friends, what would they think of my speaking to a stranger so?

“The buzzing cloud of ignoble hesitations and fears filled my ears so that the one loud call of my life was drowned out. Those who rear us have long generations of experience in making us cowardly and ignorant and afraid of our own true selves. So in the vibrating silence, when he waited for my decision, I felt nothing but confused and incoherent embarrassment, shot through with a pain I was to live upon from that day forward. I held out my hand in a lifeless way. ‘Adieu, monsieur,’ I said faintly.

“He held my hand in his. ‘But, mademoiselle—I *can't* let you—see, I have a new ideal of womanhood since I have seen you,—I have a new ideal of humanity!’ His voice trembled, his dear, harsh, uneven voice, and he looked at me—!

“But my friends came trooping down the hall. He recognized them, and stood again on one side as they came up to me. We passed on, I carried along by the sluggish overpowering current of respectability, all my native strength to reach out for what was mine, sapped by tradition. As I last saw him, he was standing staring at the floor, his hand arrested at his temple, midway in the familiar gesture which

was always to be before my eyes. And, child, I walked on—straight away from all that should have been mine, into the dun and colorless existence that I have led ever since. I left behind me possible unhappiness, but with it I left my life. All that other women live, and live through years, and years, was compressed for me into the time between sunset and sunrise. All that I have to remember and cherish as my very own life, lasted twelve hours,—but what hours!”

She stopped; she sat for a moment looking into the dying fire. She had forgotten us . . . quite forgotten. She stood up, a dim, shadowy figure among the shadows, she struck her hands together, “What hours!” she cried, in a dreadful voice of pain and joy.

She went away without another word. I never saw her again.



## THE SICK PHYSICIAN

### I

SHE had been at first quite the most insignificant element in the life of Newton, a subject of casual comment among the much-occupied, card-playing Marthas of the little suburban village. "Did you know that that new driver for Hanneman's livery-stable is married?" Betty Holt asked her partner, Mrs. Bodwin. "Yes, that tow-headed foreign-looking boy. They say she's even younger than he. Did anybody make trumps? And of all things, they have a baby! Oh, pshaw! I didn't mean to play that ace!"

Then suddenly, horribly, she became an object of charity. "Oh, Betty . . . those Polacks that live down near the railroad tracks . . . he was thrown out by a runaway team and brought home dead! And there isn't a cent in the house! Somebody's got to see to them. Can't you?"

"Oh, my dear, I couldn't! My nerves . . . They say the widow is dreadful! Somebody told Harry that she tried to kill herself when they brought him home. Can't you go?" "Why, my lace curtains are just half on the drying-frames! Don't you suppose Mar-

garet Wagner would? Her horrid husband is off again, and there's nothing to keep her. She's good at handling that sort of folks. The widow's not more than a child herself."

After this, there was a time when she was the tragically insoluble problem which a freak of circumstance threw inexorably into the hands of the busy, bridge-playing suburban matrons. She wanted but one thing, the dark young creature, with her girl's face set in steady anguish, she asked but one boon of the well-dressed, well-fed strangers who came and went through her one-roomed hut . . . she cried out to them to allow her to take her child and follow her husband. There was no other thought in the world for her. She asked them, the wondering, shrinking, half-frightened fair ladies, over and over in her passionate, unintelligible speech, what other course she could take.

"If we could only talk to her!" cried May Bodwin.

"What would you say to her if we could!" asked Betty Holt unanswerably.

It was the simplest thing in the world that was finally said to her, but it bowed her slim, unresigned shoulders to the burden of life. Mrs. Emery, stealing an hour from little Paul's invalid's room, made the startling discovery that the poverty-stricken young Polack knew French, a pure, fluent speech, quite unlike the halting, boarding-school jargon which was the



common Newton version of the language. Mrs. Emery then struggled with the half-forgotten phrases enough to make out that she also spoke German; and ran to get Margaret Wagner, half German herself. That moody, bitter-lipped, kind-eyed woman took the rebellious child into her empty arms and cried unsparingly, "*Sie sind eine böse!* You are a bad woman! Your little girl may live to be as happy as you have been. And you would keep her from it!" The widow of Ignace Marwenka stiffened in the other's clasp. "Would I have my child know this hour I now live?" she cried angrily.

Margaret Wagner held her off at arm's length and asked her piercingly, "If you could forget him, and stop all your grief by forgetting him, would you do it?" The other, for an instant, still faced her with hard, fierce eyes of embittered desolation. Then the shaft went home. For the first time she began to weep and to cry out sobbingly, "Ach, never! never would I forget!"

"But you wish to refuse your child that precious thing you would not forget."

The widow flung herself down on the bed in passion of protest. "But it is too hard . . . too hard to live! *Ich kann es nicht! Je ne puis pas!* Not even for my baby! Not even for Lis' Elena!"

Margaret Wagner knelt down beside her and said brokenly, "There are harder lives than other wives

must live. Suppose he left you for other women. Suppose you had no child!" In all her married life, she had never broken her proud silence before. The long years of her endurance and her reticence looked out from her steady eyes and lighted sadly the path for the bleeding feet of Lisa Marwenka.

## II

She had so shocked her staid and well-regulated neighbors, little used to violent emotions, that they did not leave her to the impersonal ministrations of charity as they did the other dwellers in the shanties by the railroad tracks. The question of her future now began to occupy them as acutely as the question of persuading her to live had done.

"She says she is willing to do anything to support Lis' Elena," sighed Betty Holt to Mrs. Emery. "But she is so fearfully incompetent. It drives me wild with nerves to have her 'round."

"Incompetent! Why, didn't you know she can speak French and . . ."

"Oh, I mean incompetent for a woman of her class! She's too ignorant ever to try to teach French . . . she's too ignorant for any use in every way. It's a literal fact that Gretchen Wagner had to show her how to hold a needle!"

Mrs. Emery shuddered. "And such a helpless child as that to be given the care of a baby!" Her own

life was spent in a black prison-house of anxiety over a frail little only son who threatened with every wind that blew to leave the loving hands that clung to him so desperately . . . so desperately that life seemed but one long apprehension. "Suppose Lis' Elena should be delicate!" she shivered again.

"Well she's not, a bit!" Mrs. Holt reassured her. "She's a big, fat blonde baby, just as different from Lisa as can be. Like the father, I suppose. Well, the only thing to do with Lisa is to try to teach her something useful. Maybe she could learn to wait on table for extra help at dinner-parties, or something like that."

But she did not learn this, or any other occupation which Newton women had been taught to consider useful. It was not for lack of faithful effort on their part and on hers. Day after day, she brought her rosy, yellow-haired child to the home of the Holts, the Bodwins, the Wagners, and the Emerys, and listened docilely to the instructions of those deft-handed housekeepers about sewing, cooking, washing dishes, cleaning, making fires, darning stockings; and to the last day of her service she performed all these operations as badly as at her first attempt. "You don't try!" Mrs. Bodwin accused her, one day.

She raised fathomless black eyes. "I try to try!" she said pitifully, in her painful, newly learned English.

Mrs. Bodwin was Connecticut born, bred, dried, and

seasoned, and had no use for sentimentality in the practical matters of life. "I can't keep such a do-less creature. She'd ruin us!" she said indignantly to Mrs. Holt.

It was a critical period in Lisa's affairs. The four women who had somehow helplessly seemed to saddle themselves with the responsibility for her fate, tried their best to evade this self-assumed burden. Their last attempt was to persuade her to let them write her family in Poland for aid. It was a subject they never mentioned to her again, so startled were they by the fanged image of rage which she became at the suggestion. In fact, they never learned from her so much as the name she bore before her marriage. They gathered the evident fact from her that she was highly educated and delicately bred, and from Hanneman, the livery-stable man, only that her husband had been entirely the reverse of these things. "He couldn't read or write, Marwenka couldn't, but he was an awful good sort of fellow for all that! The finest driver I ever had! He thought lots of his folks, too. There was more than twenty dollars in the purse us boys got up for the widow. And do you know what that doggoned fool woman went and did with it? Bought a gold locket to put a piece from his old coat in (there wa'n't much more'n that left of him after the smash-up) and a gold chain to hang it 'round her neck. She says she's never going to take it off till she dies. And

the funeral expenses not paid! No, ma'am, I can't tell you any more about Marwenka."

There were no other sources of information. And they never knew any more. They surmised endless romances about the circumstances which led to the heart-breaking happy union of the two so diverse creatures; but only on one occasion did Lisa by word or act throw any light on her past.

That occasion befell one day in December, the year after her husband's death, when she was sitting dully over a basket of darning in the Emery house. Her four patronesses were gathered around the piano in the next room practising in their chatty, amateurish manner a Christmas carol. All the four had pleasant, light, untrained voices, and occasionally furnished a musical number for the program of a home-made entertainment. This was for the Christmas party of the Sunday School.

They had chosen an arrangement of a Gounod Christmas chant, and were now admitting the un-wisdom of their choice, with their usual comfortable acceptance of narrow limitations. It was quite beyond their capacities, they said unconcernedly to each other, after fumbling through the first measures. Mrs. Emery, the pianist of the group, complained that the accompaniment was too hard for her, and May Bodwin protested at the height of the soprano part.

"I can't sing a decent A, you know I can't," she

broke off in the middle of a measure, to remark conversationally, and, at the sound of a sudden explosive exclamation back of her, turned to receive full-face, one of the most startling sensations of her life.

Afterward, each one confessed that she had felt as though a tigress had sprung out at her from a corner of the safe, comfortable sitting-room. Lisa Marwenka stood before them, her face very white, her eyes very black, her attitude tense as a slinger about to launch his bolt. She flung it at them like an insult, "You do not try! You are lazy wit your breathe! You do not *try!*"

They stared at her! This violent, imperious authority was no one they had ever seen. They shrank from her as she darted in on Mrs. Bodwin, snatching off her belt and commanding with fury, "*Breathe! Breathe!* Down here where iss my handt . . . deeper . . . now again . . . deeper . . . now think high . . . *high* . . . HIGH . . ." she motioned passionately towards the zenith. "Now anodder breathe . . . now . . . *heraus!* . . . A . . . A!" She struck the note on the piano and stamped her foot. From the throat of the astonished Mrs. Bodwin issued a clear resonant note such as never before in her life had she emitted.

"You can, you see!" Lisa accused her.

"You hypnotized me!" protested the matron, still held by the other's flaming eyes.

"If you try, you can," said Mrs. Marwenka scornfully. "All of you could."

She pushed Mrs. Emery away from the piano-stool and sat down, striking, without looking at the music, the first chords of the accompaniment. She gathered them up; she swept them along with the quickly increasing impetus of the approach to the glorious opening melody, she hurled them into song with one dynamic word of command. "SING!" she cried, as though death were the only alternative. And with one accord began the first rehearsal of the Newton Woman's Quartet.

It lasted an hour, sixty minutes of more intense life than the four married, settled ladies had dreamed they were still capable of feeling. Their leader gave them no time to be self-conscious, to wonder at themselves or at her. They existed in the moment, and the moment's impersonal affair was to cast out upon the air the audible embodiment of a noble spiritual truth. Nothing less would their commander receive from them.

She raged at them, she pleaded with them, she sang all their parts in turn, pouring out a powerful, perfectly trained young voice that flooded them and swept them away; she coaxed them over difficult places; she swooped down on them, broad-winged and carried them up in eagle flights to pealing climaxes. Their cheeks were flushed as in their girlhood, their eyes



shone star-like. They had forgotten their creeping everyday life. May Bodwin was oblivious to the high price of steak and the need of floor-polish, Betty Holt's nerves but made her the more sensitively alive to this new joy, Mrs. Emery, Paul's mother, for the first time in years, knew a beauty untarnished by fear, and Margaret Wagner caught a glimpse of a door of escape from the humiliating bitterness of her life. They were trembling in excitement, they were singing beyond their wildest dreams of their capacities, but above all they were penetrated, dazzled, drunk with the music. With all their souls they were calling the world to forget its cares as they had forgotten theirs, to worship with them the greatness of humility. Ardentlly they chanted the words,

*"Though low be the chamber,"*

They sang fervently.

They were wavering agnostics, lukewarm doubters, all of them,

*"Come in! Come in and adore!"*

they chanted with uplifted hearts, ecstatic as a company of medieval saints, their eyes fixed on Lisa Marwenka's exalted face of command.

At the end there was a silence, as they looked won-

deringly at each other like travelers returned from a distant country. Lisa's cheeks were glistening with tears. She wiped them away with a murmured explanation. "It is the feerst music I hear in so long."

At last they found their tongues, their voices of everyday prose, and cried out, "But you never told us . . . that you are such a musician as . . ."

She nodded simply, "Ach, yess, it iss all I know. Anything but that wass I nefer taught."

"You must give piano lessons!" this from Mrs. Emery.

Lisa looked up in astonishment, as if fearing ridicule. "Ach, the piano I play not at all . . . only little . . . very bad. To sing is what I . . ."

They remembered her masterly management of the accompaniment and laughed.

"You must give singing lessons, then."

The widow clasped her hands, "For *pay*?" She was incredulous ecstasy.

They nodded amply.

"Ach! to earn money for Lis' Elena!" cried the musician.

The others were holding a little aloof from her, still overawed by her Delphic visitation of inspiration for which, as though it were the most obvious and expected of phenomena, she vouchsafed no explanation or apology; but at that moment occurred an incident which restored the balance of power. Mrs. Bod-

win's maid-of-all-work burst in with Lis' Elena choking and strangling in her arms.

Lisa sprang for the child with a piercing scream of terror and held it close to her heart, turning eyes of idiotic terror on the others. "What to do? What to do!" she cried wildly.

"Stand her on her head and shake her!" called Mrs. Bodwin, hastening towards them.

Lisa tried tremblingly to obey, but the heavy child slipped from her arms into a struggling heap on the floor, over which she wrung impotent agonized hands.

"This way! So!" said Mrs. Bodwin, seizing the sufferer energetically, reversing her under one arm and administering a series of sharp blows to her back. There was a gurgle, a gasp, an indignant yell from Lis' Elena, and a large bone button rolled on the floor.

Lisa fell to her knees, white and shaken, crying out, "You save her from to die! You are so wonder wise!"

May Bodwin laughed. It is possible that at this moment they had, all of them, some half-conscious divination of what their relations were to be. "You teach us to sing all our songs like that one to-day and we'll take care of the baby for you," she said.

So began a new phase in Lisa's life. She was called Mrs. Marwenka now, and sometimes, "Madame." Newton ladies thought the foreign title "suited her type." The number of her pupils increased rapidly,

and before long a chorus was organized, under Mrs. Bodwin's management, although the other three of the original quartet feared for the success of this undertaking. In the first place Lisa insisted that the ladies learn for the first rehearsal, a small part of one of the Bach "Passions," a strange, ascetic choice which augured ill for a miscellaneous gathering of suburban ladies. They were afraid, too, that the courage of their girlish leader might not suffice for the ordeal of facing so large a number of strangers, and addressing them in a half-learned foreign tongue.

But at the first rehearsal, as at all subsequent ones, the same miracle took place. The first chord of the accompaniment transformed the shrinking, insignificant girl into a very Napoleon of music, masterful, sure of herself, inordinately demanding and inordinately giving forth. She launched them upon the sea of harmony with a calm, bold certainty, she swept them from their niggling one-two-three countings out upon broad, swelling waves of noble rhythm whose existence they had not suspected; she sprang at their throats like a tiger-cat at the least sign of flagging and drew from them impetuous crescendos and ringing climaxes which made the tears of excited pleasure come into their eyes; she fell into a wide-eyed trance of tranquillity and hushed them to heavenly-mild diminishedos . . . and never for an instant did she take from them the consuming fire of her eyes.

At the end, after they had gone through a short section of the "Lamentations" better sung, a thousand times, than any music Newton had ever heard before, she laid down the folded newspaper with which she had been beating time and, dismissing them with a nod, said wearily, "That was verree, verree bad; but better than at feerst. And we will all do better next week."

The spell was over. The women in the chorus drew long breaths, and blinked rapidly, returning with surprise to themselves, to daylight, to the ordinary world, to each other. "Well . . . !" said a soprano to an alto who in everyday life was her sister, "you don't know how funny it seems to see you with your face and your hat and your gloves, just as usual."

The other understood. "I know. I felt the same way. You were just a voice."

The young leader, a somber, brooding figure in her straight black dress, had come up to this group and was listening. Another woman said, "Why, I haven't felt so stirred up . . . not since I was being courted! I declare that was the way I did feel! I thrilled as though I was falling in love again . . . and my youngest is nine years old!"

Lisa laid her thin, long-fingered hand on the other's shoulder. "That iss music," she said solemnly. "Anything smaller than that is not music . . . it iss wicked

sacrilege. And to have that . . . it is enough for any one to live. That iss my Credo."

Flying this flag, she went into single-handed combat with the intrenched forces of emotional and intellectual sloth, and inertia, and so harried, baited, and persecuted them that in six months' time there was to the eye of the most casual observer a definite change in the moral atmosphere of the town. The membership of the bridge-clubs began to decline and the attendance of those who remained technically loyal to cards was uncertain. Women made fewer aimless "shopping" expeditions into the city; the number of teas and receptions fell off a little, and wardrobes were made ready for the changing seasons with a great abatement from the usual prayerful intensity of care.

There was so little time now! Their fanatical overseer whipped laggards into line and spurred the leaders forward! Delving with titanic energy in the pastureland of Newton femininity, Madame Marwenka blasted yawning cavities among the flowers and grasses and found gold and silver and precious stones, which then with infinite patience she refined and chased and polished and set. She discovered voices in the most unexpected personalities, and having discovered them, performed the far harder exploit of fanning their owners into a flame of purposeful energy.

Margaret Wagner's pleasant alto was found to be a

powerful dramatic contralto, the use and development of which was like pure air to an invalid sickened by long confinement. Through the medium of this safe, new speech, she poured out the bitterness which had so long clogged her heart, and, purging her bosom of the perilous stuff, found that life had taught her other and sweeter things. Feeling an exalted sense of this one day, she told her teacher, "Now I see that it is true what you say. Art is enough . . . even what we poor, half-way bunglers may do and know of it. It is enough reason for going on."

They had met in the street, and Lisa was in her unmusical incarnation, a thin, black-robed figure, with deep-set, lusterless eyes. "Told I you that?" she asked, fingering nervously the little golden locket she would always wear until she died. "Told I you that it iss enough?"

Mrs. Wagner wondered at her, "Why, you said it is your creed."

The foreigner thrust the locket inside the bosom of her dress and turned away. "Oh, yess, it iss my *creed!*" she murmured uncertainly. She added bravely, however, a moment later, "Pleasse be early at the rehearse to-day."

Mrs. Emery, having but a tiny thread of a non-descript voice, had insisted that the new teacher take up with her her half-forgotten piano, in whose familiar black and white she saw, under the new instruction,



strange meanings. Laboring over the keys, she had sometimes blessed glimpses of a conception of harmony so all-embracing that every fact of life could enter into its great crescendos. "It is the first thing in my life since little Paul's sickness that sets me free of terror," she told Madame Marwenka after an hour of searching, ecstatic toil over a Beethoven Andante. "It makes me understand that life is so great that even death may not take all away from us."

The other's sinuous fingers closed on her locket hard. It was always in her hand. She smiled waveringly. She seemed for a moment even paler than usual. "Ah, you understand that, you say?" she asked, "You understand that now?" She bent over her music suddenly to hide her face. As she went out, she paused in the doorway to say fiercely, "I must work more . . . more!"

It seemed to her four friends that no one could work harder than she at that time, but in the months to come she outdid herself. Newton hummed like a great sea-shell with the echoes of her ceaseless song.

The men of the suburb were not enthusiastic. Naturally they thought of their wives as intended agreeably to supplement and embellish their own kobold-grubbings in the adjacent city. Music as vital self-expression, as the dramatic outpourings of real and potential feeling, music as the wings on which their well-tamed women folk took fiery flight for

regions of emotion related in no way to their actual lives, peacefully and inexorably circumscribed by the wedding-ring, this music they feared and distrusted as the devil's work. The author of the electrifying change they came as a body solidly to oppose. She was a morbid foreigner, they said, and all that anybody knew about her was that evidently she had eloped with her father's coachman, and that was the kind of woman *she* was!

They were consequently little disposed to sympathize with their wives in the joyful excitement which now fell upon those ladies, as a result of a curious sequence of events unimportant in themselves. Somebody or other's second cousin had married the brother of the manager of a company now producing opera in English. The second cousin, coming by chance to spend Sunday in Newton, brought by chance her much-bored managerial brother-in-law and he, by chance, hearing 'Lisa Marwenka, was no longer bored but vastly startled. From here on 'Lisa's four protecting ladies could scarcely keep pace with the swirl of events. He went to see 'Lisa that afternoon, and she sang for him again. And he sent for 'Lisa to come to his office in the city. . . .

She came back to Newton with her great tidings, showing a faint smile at the exclamations of her "ladies" as she called them, who were quite overcome with scared delight. It was as though an eagle had

soared up out of a hen-yard, they felt. 'Lisa tried to moderate their excitement. "It was not the Metropolitan," she told them. "But, if it pleases you—if it pleases you, I am to sing *Madama Butterfly*—*vonce*—*von* time to see if I do it recht. But only eff I learn dose English wordts so I speak dem goodt. You can teach me dat Englisch, not?"

They not only taught her that English, but they did nothing for the next week but occupy themselves feverishly with preparations. They made her kimonos for her with their own hands, and the costume of Lis' Elena who was to be the child of the story. They rehearsed the business of her part incessantly with her. They trained Lis' Elena in her rôle. They held the book with endless patience to correct Lisa's memory. But, anxious not to leave a stone unturned in the path of her success, "Don't you think you would better take a lesson or two in the acting?" they asked her. "It will be all so new for you."

A flame leaped up in the midnight of her eyes. "New! There is nothing new for me in that story. It is a woman who lives without the husband she loves. And then she kill herself because she have him not. I know. I know!"

They feared among themselves that this time she was really overconfident. They feared for her memory, for her courage, for her voice, for her presence of mind.

If it had been their own *début*, they could not have known more hopeful and terrified hours.

On the night of the performance, they took their seats with heavily beating hearts. They thought that every nerve was strained for Lisa and for Lisa alone, but they had not counted on the new magic of the world to which she had introduced them. It was the first opera they had heard since the opening of their ears, and with the beginning of the overture, they entered once and for all fully into their kingdom of enchantment. For a moment, all their personal connection with the evening was gone from their minds. They were lost in that finest, most unearthly of all joys, an impersonal impression of art. It marked an epoch in their lives. They heard, they heard what the orchestra was proclaiming. They distinguished the different voices of the different instruments as though archangels were calling to them. They were aware of the rich texture of the harmony, they caught the intricate pattern of modern orchestral music. Lisa and the abandon of her passion in the love-dust of the first act's finale were for the moment, to these listeners, but parts of a glorious whole.

When the curtain went down, however, they came to themselves, and, silenced by the staccato outburst of applause, clasped hands of rapt self-congratulation. From their box they could catch glimpses of what was passing in the wings. The impresario was shaking

hands with Lisa between her responses to the applause. Even to their inexperienced eyes, it was plain that the *prima donna* was accepted.

The next act proved her more than that. If her singing pleased the critics it was her acting which carried away the now aroused audience. Such yearning was in her demand for news of her husband, such an exultation over the arrival of his ship glowed through the oriental dignity of her preparations for his homecoming, that when the curtain fell on the pathetic scene of endless waiting and heart-sick suspense, the audience would not be denied a curtain-call. For a time the management refused, but then, against all tradition, the impresario sent out his new find, Lis' Elena trotting by her side.

The house roared at their appearance. There were shouts from the gallery of "Brava! Brava!" and a loud, pattering storm of applause. Lisa walked across the stage, holding her child by the hand and bowing her thanks. As she passed near her friends she looked into the half-obscurity of their box, her painted face glaringly lighted by the foot-lights. Their enthusiastic hand-clapping stopped suddenly, the smiles of pride and relief and pleasure were stricken from their faces. They shrank together, staring at the expression of her eyes, strange in the smiling mask she held up to the audience. She lifted for them to see, from where it swung low on the breast of her kimono, the little

golden locket, the locket which was always in her hand. She disappeared, Lis' Elena skipping in delight to see their kind familiar faces.

The curtain rose. The four ladies did not stir once during the intolerable pathos of that last scene. At the unsheathing of the dagger, Betty Holt caught a sharp breath, but her eyes did not waver. The child came running in, there was the heartbreaking passage of pretty, tender, desolated mother-chatter while its eyes were bandaged and the dishonored flag set in its hand. The orchestra sent out a sinister note and the woman without a husband passed quietly behind the screen.

The blindfolded child played smilingly with the doll and waved the little flag. The violins filled the hearts of the listeners with ill-omened chords, with tragic and dissonant cadences. The four women in the box were white to the lips.

The music changed. The other actors came running on the stage. The screen was cast down, showing the huddled prostrate figure in the kimono, the blindfolded child was carried off. The curtain went down.

It was a thoroughly dramatic rendition of that most dramatic finale.

The four ladies in the box sat motionless, staring before them. From behind the curtain came an ominous sound of hurrying feet, startled, shocked

voices . . . They leaned forward, straining their ears . . .

About them the well-pleased audience stirred and murmured and caught its breath in satisfaction over an artistic triumph. Scraps of talk drifted into the box. "A consummate singer," pronounced the thin-faced elderly man who had taken notes all through the performance. The friends of the prima-donna had conjectured him an influential music-critic. "I never heard that aria before the suicide more admirably phrased."

From a group of enthusiastic music-students whose heads had been bent over the score of the opera, came a girl's fervent voice, "What more could anybody want in the world than to be able to do that!"

Mrs. Bodwin turned her head. "What are we waiting for?" she asked challengingly. They looked at each other and made no answer.

The door at the back of the box opened and Lis' Elena burst in, the black wig gone from her yellow hair, her eyes dancing. "I dot a box of candy!" she chanted, holding it up at them triumphantly. "The fat man dave it to me for not laughin' when he wiggled his nose. I *didn't* this time, did I?"

"Where is your mother?" asked Mrs. Emery, in a frightened voice.

Lis' Elena looked about her with cheerful vagueness.



"Oh, back dere, I dess. She told me dis mornin' that as soon as the man carried me out, to run along to you. She said I was to go home wif you. She said you would take care of me."

Betty Holt's hand went to her throat. "Did she . . . did she tell you anything else?"

Lis' Elena nodded. "Yes, she did." Her eyes wandered over the audience. "Oh, see dat lady wif de . . ."

"What did she say? What did she say?" They bent over her urgently.

"Why . . . why . . . oh, yes, . . . she said to tell you that her part was so hard for her to play, she'd have to rest now."

From behind the curtain came an ominous sound of slow feet, stepping heavily, weighted with a burden. . . .

The four, pale, motherly women closed about the smiling little girl, shielding her from the stage. Margaret Wagner stifled a cry and knelt down by the singer's child.

"What is this around your neck!" she asked in a horrified whisper.

"My mamma put it around my neck," said Lisa Elena.

It was the little golden locket.





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